Wild 135

MORE THAN 30 YEARS OF WILDERNESS ADVENTURE HERITAGE

AURORA AUSTRALIS
BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SNOWSHOEING
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NEPAL TENTED TREK
NAMADGI TRACK NOTES
HIMALAYAN HIGHS: PART 2
TURKISH RECIPES
TENT REVIEW

Tread a new path *in snowshoes*

ISSN 1030-469X
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9 771030 469006
MAY-JUN 2013, NO 135
$8.95* INC GST

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

Exploring the unexplored
Leo Houlding & his team journey
into the lost world of the Amazon jungle
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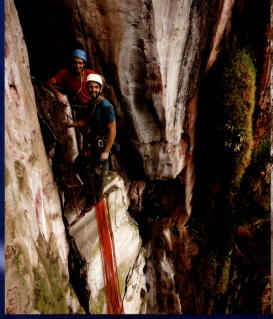

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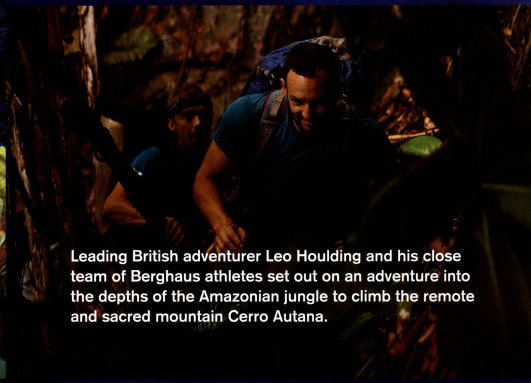

Leading British adventurer Leo Houlding and his close team of Berghaus athletes set out on an adventure into the depths of the Amazonian jungle to climb the remote and sacred mountain Cerro Autana.

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Wild
AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE
Established 1981
May-June 2013,
issue 135 $8.95*
* Maximum Australian recommended retail price only

WARNING
The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.

Cover *Rory Callinan snowshoes from Thredbo to Mt Kosciuszko.* Lisa Hogben

Contents *A mob of grazing kangaroos emerge from the fog near Moruya River on the south coast of New South Wales.* Jono Winnel

International travellers rank Australia above all other destinations for 'world-class beauty and natural environments', more than associate this with Hawaii or Switzerland.

There's change afoot

Allow me to introduce myself as the new caretaker of Wild and its remarkable legacy. As I don the proverbial big boots and backpack of my predecessor and those before her, I want you to know I see this as a two-way relationship. I know *Wild* readers to be more passionate and better informed than any out there and hope you will be forthcoming with your ideas and feedback through all the channels we have available. I heartily entreat you to get in touch by post, phone, email message, website comment, Facebook post, tweet or carrier pigeon and tell me what you want to see in your magazine and on your digital hub.

Now that I have begged your attention, I have a confession. I'm a new Australian. While my past life was spent guiding tourists around French mountains, suffering terminal sunburn on spontaneous hikes in Mallorca's Tramontana range and camping on the secluded beaches of Wales, my rebirth as a true wilderness junkie and bushwalker only came about on my first trip to Australia. I moved here from the UK as soon as the visa stampers would let me.

Exploring is in my blood, which is why I am so thrilled to now be connected with readers who are so well-travelled in their own country. After many years working in and reporting on the travel industry, with a focus on sustainable and adventure tourism, I find myself torn and brimming with questions following the Victorian government's release of guidelines for tourism development within the state's national parks.

The guidelines, set in motion last year and due to be tabled for legislation in the next couple of months, have made real the prospect of private investors buying up chunks of previously untouchable land across two thirds of national parks including Wilsons Promontory and the Grampians. Before joining the campaign of groups like the Victorian National Parks Association, which views the guidelines as a portent of doom for conservation reserves that will lead to irreversible environmental damage and undermine park management systems, I wanted to consider all sides of the argument.

According to research by Tourism Australia, international travellers rank Australia above all other destinations for 'world-class beauty and natural environments', more than associate this with Hawaii or Switzerland for example. And many states are seen to be cashing in on the eco-tourism dollar through small-scale developments within national park boundaries - think Tasmania's Cradle Mountain Huts or the Northern Territory's Longitude 131 tented accommodation next to Uluru - while Victorian parks' revenue per visitor stagnates below the norm. The fear, of course, is that letting in so-called 'sensible and sensitive developments' by private investors will not only disrupt the serenity of current park users and negatively impact ecosystems but also give way to Hilton high rises and McDonald's outlets further down the line. National parks are not protected from overdevelopment by the relative inaccessibility that Australia's two biggest attractions are (the Great Barrier Reef and Uluru). And ministers have not yet officially ruled out large-scale projects, including a two-edged proviso in the guidelines that leases will be issued 'commensurate with the level of capital investment'.

Gatekeeper Ryan Smith, the Victorian minister for environment and climate change, has set out a five-stage approval process for developers that includes a 28-day public consultation, independent environmental risk assessment and separate 'formal, targeted engagement process' (read focus group) with the local community if requested. He also states that some proposals will be put before the federal government, projects on land that has 'previously been significantly disturbed' will be preferred and developer track records checked. In summary, apart for the exclusion of areas classified as wilderness parks, wilderness zones and natural areas under the National Parks Act 1975, the guidelines remain infuriatingly vague.

When politicians talk about a 'net public benefit' they tend to be talking about money. I'm all for broadening the appeal of national parks so that more people come to feel strongly about protecting them, and through organisations such as the UK-based Travel Foundation I've seen first-hand how tourism can power conservation efforts, but what's hard to grasp is why we're not first focusing on maximising the existing tourism infrastructure in and around Victoria's national parks.

Victoria is already the most cleared state in the country, with parks and reserves making up only 18% of the land, and few of the remote natural areas are more than an hour's drive from infrastructure. The Grampians and Alpine national parks already have resorts embedded within them, while towns such as Port Campbell and Porepunkah are only a few minutes' drive from the neighbouring parkland. Without a more comprehensive consultation with local communities and park authorities as part of the approval process, there is a very real risk that tourism developments could end up eroding the reasons why people wanted to visit Victoria's national parks to begin with.

Now, sensing that much of my ink will be spent on this issue in the months to come, I hand the microphone over to you. Let me know your thinking on the minister's guidelines, or how eco-tourism developments in other state parks have affected the natural environment – I'm waiting to hear from you at the usual address and following digital locations:

Carlie.trotter@primecreative.com.au
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Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

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Publisher Prime Creative Media
ABN 51 127 239 212

Printing Brougham Press

Distribution Gordon & Gotch Australia Pty Ltd

Subscription rates are currently $47.95 for one year (six issues), $89 for two years, or $125 for three years, to addresses in Australia. For overseas addresses, the rates are $85, $165, and $235, respectively. When moving, advise us immediately of your new and old addresses to avoid lost or delayed copies.

Advertising rates are available on request.
Copy deadlines (advertising and editorial): 11 November, 14 January, 11 March, 14 May, 16 July, 16 September.
See below for publication dates.

Contributions, preferably well illustrated with photographs, are welcome. Contributors' guidelines are available at wild.com.au. Written submissions should be supplied by email. Please ensure that submissions are accompanied by an envelope and sufficient postage. Names and addresses should be written on manuscripts and photos. While every care is taken, no responsibility is accepted for material submitted. Articles represent the views of the authors, and not necessarily those of the publisher.

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Wild is published bi-monthly at the end of the **month before** cover date (cover dates: January–February, March–April, May–June, July–August, September–October, November–December) by Prime Creative Media.

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HAWAII DREAMING

What a delight to read Stephen Sexton's article about the Kalalau Trail (*Wild* issue 134). When some American friends told me about Kalalau in the 1970s it sounded like a quasi-mystical experience and I knew I had to see it for myself. I eventually got there in 1993 but it was worth the wait; the hike, the scenery, the general atmosphere, all exceeded my daydreams. Reading Stephen's account, it seems that little has changed in 20 years. It still sounds like magic.

One difference; I came back in a rubber dinghy. At that time, a boat tour outfit called Captain Zodiac was authorised to ferry day-trippers to and from Kalalau Beach. I arranged to return with the good captain, which was an amazing way to round off my adventure, and so avoided the anticlimax of sadly retracing my steps. The dinghy took its time, cruising past dolphins, nosing into sea caves, edging under waterfalls, and showing me aspects of the coast that weren't visible from the trail. Thank you for reviving those memories. As the locals say, Kalalau No Ka Oi!

Leon Strauss
Hunters Hill, NSW

DUCKING THE ISSUE?

In the 1980s, the WA government banned duck hunting. Although not a hunter, I campaigned against the ban because I saw the 8000 duck hunters who were about to lose their recreational pursuit as potentially becoming 8000 'wetland management volunteers' who could hunt ducks on public wetlands.

The NSW government's program of allowing hunters into national parks to shoot feral animals is a resource that the conservation movement should be using, not abusing ('From the Editor', *Wild* issue 134). They may be less effective than professionals in 'controlling' feral animal populations but it is unfair to compare professionals using very expensive helicopters with recreational shooters who, over time, could become a cheap and reliable service to the government. Both types of hunters require supervision, so neither group is without cost to taxpayers, but recreational hunters do not charge for their services. If the government, with the support of the conservation movement, viewed recreational hunters as a resource to be managed, trained and directed into places and activities that produced useful on-ground management benefits, then we would have a win-win situation.

Bernie Masters
Capel, WA

EFFORT NEEDED NOW TONY

I read with some encouragement the media coverage of efforts by environment minister Tony Burke to have 170 000 hectares of iconic Tasmanian forests included in world heritage listing, for which he should be congratulated. Until these areas gain official recognition, however, logging can still occur during the nomination process. This is insane, as foreign companies like Malaysia-based Ta Ann Holdings are the key drivers behind logging of native forests in Tasmania. The minister needs to use all available powers to urgently safeguard these icon forest areas until they are listed. This brings me to another lost opportunity by the Federal Government: the Tarkine. For Minster Burke to only nominate a small strip of coastline, and not even a modest core area of the Tarkine, is astoundingly short-sighted. The Tarkine is a very sensitive area of rainforest and lush freshwater catchments home to the largest freshwater crayfish in the world, and the only part of Tasmania with disease-free Tasmanian devils. The Tarkine has already become popular for tourism, which means long-term jobs as opposed to short-term mining jobs that could cause irreplaceable environmental damage.

Timothy J Bidder
Collaroy, NSW

UNDERDIAGNOSED AND DANGEROUS

I appreciated Belinda Smith's editorial on water balance (*Wild* issue 132) as I have worried about the constant push to drink more and more water for many years.

I was the medical expert in the case of Mr Dent and would like to point out that psychogenic polydypsia by itself causes only minor degrees of hyponatraemia. For water intoxication to be severe, the brain needs to release vasopressin to stop the body excreting water. Unfortunately with psychogenic polydypsia, the drugs used to treat the underlying psychiatric condition may cause the release of vasopressin on an intermittent basis. The combination can be rapidly fatal; the same applies to using ecstasy. Exercise associated hyponatremia (EAH) as a cause of death is under diagnosed. Identifying hyponatremia after death is difficult and requires elimination of other causes, which can be difficult if not impossible. All the factors need to align (eg unfit, more than four hours exercise, access to water, evidence of confusion, evidence of lack of communication), and blood chemistry after death is unreliable. One of the key features in the Boston marathon study was that the EAH sufferers tended to be quiet, inactive and sit in the corner, with confusion also a major symptom.

Tony Bell
Via email

A LOAD OF NONG-SENSE

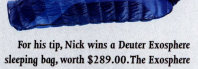
After looking forward to your article on day walks in the Dandenong Ranges National Park (*Wild* issue 134), I read with indignation: "A stone's throw from Melbourne, the 'Nongs offer fantastic options for day walks'. I was born in Dandenong Hospital, have walked for 25 years with the Dandenong Valley Bushwalking Club and lived for 20 years in Emerald. In my 50 years I have never heard anyone refer to the Dandenong Ranges as 'the Nongs'. It may have seemed like a right dandy phrase to use at the time but I think it is a load of 'nong' sense.

Heather Walker
Via email

BUSHWALKING TIP

I use a large strong plastic bag as a pack liner for wet weather walks in places such as southwest Tasmania. The bag I have is approximately 80-litre capacity and can be bought from vet practices (they are used as body bags for animals). They're difficult to puncture and when no longer waterproof, can be recycled.

Nick Hallebone
East Malvern, Vic



For his tip, Nick wins a Deuter Exosphere sleeping bag, worth $289.00. The Exosphere is filled with Thermo ProLoft to keep you warm and has water-repellent areas at the head, sides and feet to keep you dry. Elastic chamber seams allow up to 25 per cent stretch, giving you a comfortable sleep.

Reader's letters and tips are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of fewer than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, 11–15 Buckhurst St, South Melbourne, Vic 3025 or email carlie.trotter@primecreative.com.au

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Gliding High

Photograph subject Katherine Wilde writes: *This was taken from Point Bonney in the Flinders Ranges on the June long weekend last year. My partner Carl and I spent a chilly winter's morning climbing from Moonarie Gap, all the while being checked out by a couple of cheeky glider pilots. When we finally made it to the summit, Carl captured this picture of me with his Fuji X10 as they came in for a much closer look.*

By submitting a *Wild* Shot you can win a fantastic camera bag and accessory pack from Lowepro worth $489. For tips and tricks, check out wild.com.au/reviews/item/lowepro

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We are after any outdoor shots that are humorous, inspiring, spectacular, or all three.

Aussies flood Everest foothills for 60th anniversary

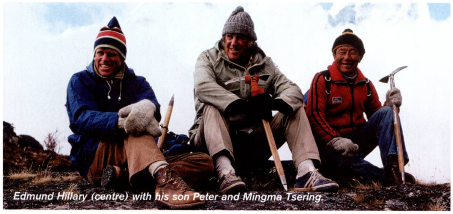
THE AUSTRALIAN APPETITE for trekking in Nepal has peaked ahead of the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of Everest this May, figures from adventure operator World Expeditions suggest.

Almost every place on World Expeditions' five special anniversary treks has been filled, with an extra departure added to the classic Everest circuit itinerary to meet demand and Australian travellers far outnumbering their British counterparts.

Sue Badyari, World Expeditions chief executive, said: 'Hype around the anniversary has given people an excuse to tick Everest off the bucket list - 30 per cent having never trekked before - but tented treks like ours are also increasingly appealing to bushwalkers who like to have a minimal impact when they travel.'

Around 80 Australians will convene at Thyangboche Monastery on 29 May for a dinner party to mark Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay's conquest of the world's highest mountain in 1953, though this is outside the traditional trekking season.

Badyari added: 'Trekking in Nepal has been misrepresented and funnelled, thanks to guidebooks, into the March-April or October-November months when May is actually a beautiful time to visit the region, and December-January the driest and quietest.'



Edmund Hillary (centre) with his son Peter and Mingma Tsering.

She stressed that while Nepal is becoming more accessible and therefore tracks more congested in peak periods, there are numerous opportunities for walkers and campers to transgress from the main trails and townships.

'People aspire to go above 4000 metres, and these treks are comprehensive, challenging both your physical and mental aptitude,' she added.

Nepalese media reported a higher than normal influx of international mountaineers in March, as climbers sought to acclimatise ahead of the anniversary.

Firestarters threaten Jerusalem

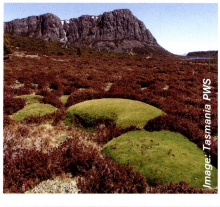


Image: Tasmania PWS

HUMAN-CAUSED FIRES like that which burnt half a hectare of alpine vegetation next to the walking track at Damascus Gate at the start of the year remind us of the importance of Tasmania's Walls of Jerusalem National Park, reports Grant Dixon.

Look east from nearby Mt Jerusalem across a landscape dotted with the bleached skeletons of fire-killed native conifers and you understand the risk. A human-caused fire in 1960-61 in Tasmania Central Plateau, considered by some to be the most ecologically significant in Australia's history, dramatically reduced the population and resulted in local extinction of the endemic pencil pine.

Just downwind of the recent fire is the pencil pine forest of Dixons Kingdom, possibly the most extensive remaining example of this community on Earth and one that attracts thousands of walkers each year.

While quick action by nearby walkers and a water-bombing helicopter extinguished the blaze, the long-term security of the Walls of Jerusalem landscape and its rare ecosystems can only be ensured by the total exclusion of fire.

The increase in illegal campfire use in recent years, despite the entire area being fuel-stove-only, is therefore of great concern.

SCROGGIN

Time to fight the dam, again

A community campaign has been galvanised in the Blue Mountains by the resurrection of plans to raise the Warragamba Dam by Infrastructure NSW. The proposal to raise the dam 23 metres to mitigate floods downstream, and by doing so inundate thousands of hectares of wilderness and threaten the rare camden white gum in particular, has been branded misguided on multiple occasions. To ensure it is again rejected by policymakers, campaigners urge people to visit colongwilderness.org.au/dont-raise-dam.

Bring on the Boiling Pot upgrade

Access to the Noosa Heads coastal track will be altered through April and May while improvement works (set to complete on 14 June) are undertaken on the Boiling Pot lookout. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is investing $145,000 to enhance the site overlooking Laguna and Tea Tree Bay, replacing handrails, pavement, seating and rock walls.

Clarence canoe trail to be unveiled

Clarence River Tourism is preparing for the official launch of Australia's longest canoe and kayak trail later this year, while reminding paddlers that the water level has returned to an ideal level and speed after unusually strong floods in February. The 195-kilometre trail, which is awaiting the preparation of further campsites, starts near Black Mountain in Nyomboi-Binderay National Park and is populated by one of the north coast's largest platypus colonies.

Loo with a view open for business

A $50,000 sealed tank toilet with mountain views has been unveiled near the Vallejo Gantner Hut in the Alpine National Park. The luxurious facility was built to replace one that needed significant maintenance and is expected to become something of a bushwalking destination in itself by Parks Victoria.

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New gold rush may wreck rivers

A DECISION BY THE Victorian Government to allow fossickers into nine more national parks has stunned conservationists, *Phil Ingamells reports.*

The agreement with the Miners and Prospectors Association of Victoria, which extends members' access to national parks including the Yarra Ranges, Lake Eildon and Mitchell River, could see creek banks carved away and river species threatened in the search for gold.

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) has been asked to establish where prospecting should be permitted in individual parks but not given licence to refuse the scheme outright.

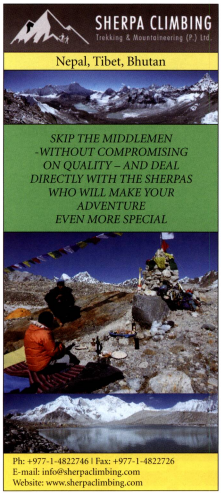
Fossicking permits for state forests are generally available but Victoria is the only state that allows recreational fossickers into national parks.

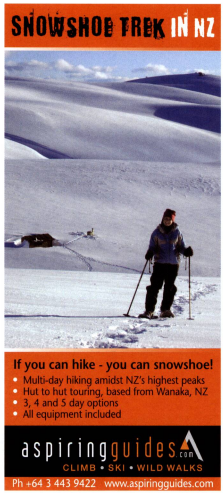
Conservationists are most concerned about the association's request for access to heritage rivers, where extensive digging could lead to increased silt, turbidity and pollutants that harm invertebrates in the water and the fish that depend on them.

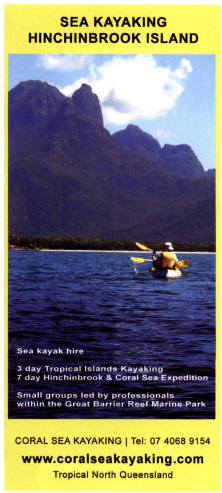
They argue that prospectors already have access to large areas of land outside the parks in eastern Victoria, while Aboriginal cultural sites and threatened species such as some ground orchids could also be damaged by digging.

The association claims modern gold fossicking is not destructive and would benefit national parks by increasing visitor numbers and therefore domestic tourism revenue.

The impacts of existing fossicking activities in box-ironbark parks have not yet been assessed. The VEAC report is due in May, with submissions invited on **prospecting.investigation@veac.vic.gov.au**.







Wild Diary

May

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The Stampede BR
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perth.thestampede.com.au

Inaugural Blood, Sweat & Fears BR
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canoe.org.au

Mt Ainslie Run Up & Power Walk BR
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everydayhero.com.au

Stromlo Forest Park Winter Series BR
4 May, ACT
canberrarunner.org.au

Autumn 12-hour R
4 May, WA
wa.rogaine.asn.au

Blue Mountains Bicentenary Re-enactment Walk
11-31 May, NSW
bluemountainscitytourism.com.auau

Sydney Trail Series Race 3 BR
12 May, NSW
mountainsports.com.au

Barron River Challenge 50 C
12 May, QLD
canoe.org.au

Junior, Senior and Veterans Mountain Running BR
12 May, ACT
mountainrunning.coolrunning.com.au

Backcountry Film Festival
15 May, VIC
backcountryfilmfestival.com

Cambodian Children's Trust Challenge M
19 May, TAS
cambodianchildrenstrustchallenge.com

The North Face 100 BR
18-19 May, NSW
coolrunning.com.au

Paddle Challenge C
19 May, WA
wa.canoe.org.au

Wildwater Winter Wash Weekend C
18-19 May, TAS
tas.canoe.org.au

Mountain Designs Adventure Race M
19 May, QLD
adventureraceaustralia.com.au

Black Mountain Run Up & Power Walk BR
21 May, ACT
coolrunning.com.au

8-hour Metrogaine & 4-hour Cyclegaine R
25 May, NT
nt.rogaine.asn.au

8-hour rogaine R
25 May, QLD
qldrogaine.asn.au

2 x 6-hour Bush Rogaine R
25-26 May, VIC
vra.rogaine.asn.au

Kathmandu Adventure Race M
25 May, NSW
maxadventure.com.au

June

Great Nosh Footrace O
2 Jun, NSW
bennelongnorthside.com.au

Macedon Ranges Trail Run BR
2 Jun, VIC
aura.asn.au

Hoka OneOne Kep Ultra Marathon BR
2 Jun, WA
keputra.com

Brisbane Adventure Race BR
1 Jun, QLD
iadventure.com.au

Mountain Designs Adventure Race M
1 Jun, VIC
adventureraceaustralia.com.au

Run Forrest half marathon BR
9 Jun, VIC
runforest.com.au

Dunkeld Adventure Endurance Hike
7-10 June, VIC
dunkeldadventure.com.au

Mountain Designs GeoQuest M
7-10 June, NSW
geoquest.com.au

Riverland Paddling Marathon P
8-10 June, SA
riverlandpaddlingmarathon.com

Tre-X Off Road Duathlon M
16 Jun, QLD
tre-x.com.au

50th Paddy Pallin 6-hour Rogaine R
16 Jun, NSW
nswrogaining.org

Sea To Summit Trail Run BR
16 Jun, SA
sarrc.asn.au

Heights of Winter rogaine R
22 Jun, NZ
rogaine.org.nz

Australian Rogaine Championships R
22-23 Jun, QLD
adventuresportnq.info

Freycinet trail run BR
23 Jun, TAS
endorfun.com.au

Three Marathons in Three Days BR
June 28-30, QLD
3marathonsin3days.com

Salomon Trail Running Series BR
Jun-30, VIC
rapidascent.com.au

Activities:
BR bush running,
M multisports, P paddling
O orienteering, R rogaining
C canoeing

Rogaining events are organised by the State rogaining associations. Canoeing events are organised by the State canoeing associations unless otherwise stated

***Wild* Diary listings provide information about wilderness events.**
Send items for publication to carlie.trotter@primecreative.com.au

© Jeff Mercier climbing the 2525m Aiguille du Chatelet, near the Monzino hut, Val Veni, Aosta region, Italy. BEN WINSTON
www.rab.uk.com

The Ghost Fungus *Omphalotus nidiformis*

This is one of the most distinctive and interesting fungi in the Australian bush, commonly forming large hand-like clusters that glow in the dark on dead stumps. It occurs in forests in southwestern and southeastern Australia (including New South Wales, Tasmania and southeast Queensland) and has been reported under several names. Originally it was described in the genus *Pleurotus*, but now is included in the genus *Omphalotus* (there is a full description in Bougher & Syme, 1998, *Fungi of Southern Australia*, University of Western Press). In the early literature it was given other species names such as *Pleurotus lampas* and *P. phosphorus* referring to the fact that it is bioluminescent or phosphorescent. The common name 'Ghost Fungus' refers to the eerie glowing of the mushrooms when fresh, which can be disconcerting when they are first encountered in a forest at night. It is said that Indigenous Australians considered them to have spiritual properties. They continue to glow for several days after collection when kept fresh, and their bioluminescence is best seen in a dark room after your eyes have taken some time to become adjusted to the dark.

It is regarded as being mildly poisonous to humans (although apparently not to snails as evident in the photo). Therefore it shouldn't be confused with the Australian fungus *Pleurotus australis*, which has a similar morphology, and also grows in clusters on stumps and at the base of trees with heart rot but is much browner on the upper cap, and not bioluminescent. It also should not be confused with the commercially available edible oyster mushroom, *Pleurotus ostreatus*, which has a similar morphology but is generally smaller. The oyster mushroom of commerce is cultivated on pieces of wood or packs of wood chips.

The reclassification of the ghost fungus in the genus *Omphalotus*, which includes several other similarly poisonous species well recognised on other continents, helps reduce the possibility of confusion with the edible oyster mushrooms in the genus *Pleurotus*.

In south-east Australia the species is most commonly found on eucalypt stumps or at the base of dead trees, although it has also been reported from the stumps of many other woody plants including species of acacia, hakea, agonis, melaleuca, nothofagus, casuarina and banksia. It was first reported in 1842 growing on a banksia stump in the vicinity of the Swan River in Western Australia.

Photographer Hugh de Kretser writes: *This was taken near Saltwater Creek in Ben Boyd National Park, NSW. Walking through the forest at night, there were clumps of these mushrooms that were literally glowing in the dark. On inspection, each of them was covered with snails and slugs that seemed to be feasting. A very strange sight!*

It is easily recognised as a tightly packed cluster of large, fairly tough and rubbery, cream-coloured, hand-like basidiocarps or as a cluster of individual mushrooms growing laterally on the stumps. Its current species name *nidiformis* refers to the nest-like appearance of the mushroom clusters or of the individual mushroom caps, which have a depression with darker brown or purple-black tints in the centre. In field keys it is classified in the mushrooms with eccentric stipes – the stipes or stems are not attached to the centre of the cap but rather are attached to the side of the cap and are not really distinct from the cap. The gills on the lower surface of the basidiocarp run laterally down the stipe that is attached to the woody substrate. The fungus is a wood rotter and so will have an extensive mycelium extending throughout the rotting stump. The adaptive significance of the bioluminescence is not well understood, although the mushrooms are known to be attractive to nocturnal insects, snails and slugs.

Phil Keane

To submit a photo for All Things Great and Small please contact carlie.trotter@primecreative.com.au
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Fatal flaw in fire management policy

This summer's reactivated debate on how we should manage national parks and other public land containing native vegetation for fire risk needs to address the way we categorise land in the first place, writes *Chris Taylor.*

When the 2009 Victorian Royal Commission into the Kilmore East fire recommended prescribed burning of five per cent of public land each year, its focus on fire management around towns and infrastructure did not account for risks posed on other land tenures such as those used for agriculture and plantations.

More details on that Black Saturday fire are emerging in a class action by more than 10 000 victims, against the electric company responsible for the powerline that ignited it, now before the Supreme Court of Victoria. The court has heard how fire burned through mostly rural land tenures consisting of farms for 10 kilometres before impacting any native vegetation on public land, and nearly 20 kilometres before entering the Kinglake National Park. It is widely accepted that the extreme weather conditions of the day drove the initial rapid spread of flames.

At the time of the fire, a number of misguided politicians and media commentators focused on the management of national parks and other areas set aside for conservation. Images of burnt paddocks were replaced with those of destroyed homes in the surrounds of the Kinglake National Park, for example. The process of 'locking up forests in conservation reserves and national parks with no ongoing fire management regime' was claimed by the then chief executive of the National Association of Forest Industries to be 'fatally wrong'.

It was seldom stated that the fire was well beyond any form of control before it impacted the Kinglake National Park. So why has much of the debate focused on the risks posed by national parks, but not the risks posed by other land tenures that initially carried the Kilmore East fire?

A possible answer may reside in what is deemed a 'risk' and what is deemed an 'asset' to be protected. While there has been concerted effort to portray conservation areas as a risk to life and property, land designated for agriculture and forestry is often deemed an asset. The active management of a plantation, for example, may include the construction of fuel breaks and prescribed burns in any native vegetation surrounding it, but not necessarily include prescribed burning the plantation itself for fear of degrading its standing commercial value.

The truth is dangerous fires burn through land deemed an asset as much as land deemed a risk. Solely focusing on land tenures consisting of parks, reserves and other areas of native vegetation on public land as a risk ignores the risks that other land tenures pose, as well as the inherent complexity of fire behavior in dynamic environments.

Prescribed burns do not suit all types of forest (cool temperate rainforests for example), just as fire risk is not equal in all types of forest. Rather than adopt a simplified and deterministic fire management strategy, experts agree we need to look at the way fire interacts with the natural environment, including actively managing fuels immediately around towns. Fire management must be responsive to the condition of the environment and its natural history, which is not true of current state government policy.

Red gums in need of rescue

A Friends of the Earth petition to prevent an ecological thinning trial in the Barmah-Millewa forest has gained more than 1000 supporters since January, but needs more signatures if it is to be taken seriously by the Victorian and NSW governments, campaigners claim.

The petition argues against the proposal to send commercial logging machinery back into the red gum forests that fringe the Murray River, where small trees across 400 hectares are marked for felling to see if this gives established ones a better chance of survival.

Environmental groups including the Victorian National Parks Association argue the trial is logging by stealth, but politicians insist the forest needs to be managed to rectify ecological problems arising from drought, climate change and altered flood regimes.

Petition founder Will Mooney said: 'The plan looks like part of a dubious push to open up national parks across the country for exploitation. 'This unique ecosystem — which is also a Ramsar-listed wetland — is the largest red gum forest on Earth; it shelters threatened species such as the superb parrot and sustains Indigenous cultural values,' he added.

State officials had claimed that felling trees less than 40 centimetres in diameter at chest height would have negligible impact on threatened species and unique wetland values, but the independent scientist called to review the proposal in 2011 admitted the overall effect of ecological thinning is unknown.

In February, the federal government committed the thinning trial to more rigorous assessment by declaring it a 'controlled action' under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act.

The red gums are far from safe, however, with plans by the Victorian, NSW and Queensland governments to open national parks to grazing, logging, hunting or commercial development doing little to quell conservationists' fears.

Barmah-Millewa campaigners believe action to restore natural flooding should be priority over an expensive thinning trial that might threaten wildlife, contaminate waterways, compact soils and spread pests.

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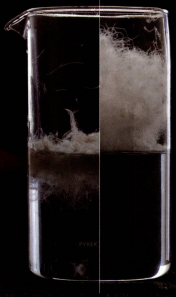

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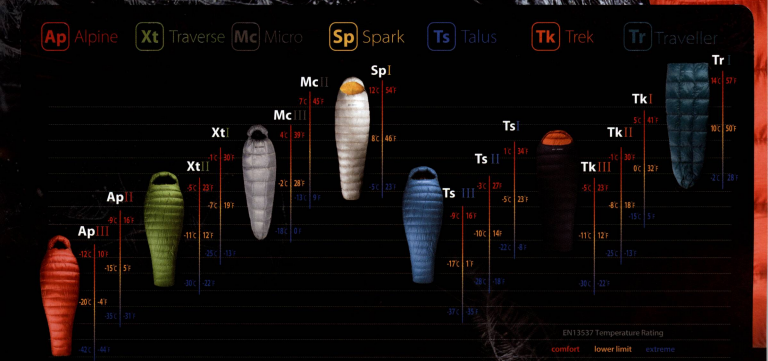

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Negotiating the rapids

The battle for the Tarkine is only just beginning, writes *Bob Brown*

In 1995, Wilderness Society director Kevin Parker and I spent 11 days in separate cells for blocking a road in the Tarkine. The Tasmanian government was bulldozing its $22 million 'Road to Nowhere' from north to south through the wilderness on the coastal side of the largest temperate rainforest in Australia.

At night in the Launceston lockup, Kevin and I found that we could talk quietly to each other via the pipes connecting the water basins. But when some female conservationists known as the Tarkine Tigers sent a note from the adjacent prison inviting us to a party (tongue-in-cheek as the walls were thick) we received a stern telling-off from the superintendent.

At the subsequent court hearing we were fined $300. Two months later I took up my seat as a Greens Senator and continued working with local ecologists and the Wilderness Society on a World Heritage nomination.

I had first ventured into the Tarkine in 1973, looking for Tasmanian tigers. None were to be found, though one had been shot there as recently as 1931, and the nineteenth century photograph of Thomas Moore wearing his tiger-skin cap on the Donaldson River is a classic in Tasmania's adventure archives. What the region was full of was Tasmanian devils, and after I disturbed a flock of ducks off a coastal lagoon one (sensing a duck dinner) trotted right up to me.

In March this year, US cable news channel CNN nominated Tasmania's Tarkine as the world's top remote wilderness. Yet instead of honouring and protecting the Tarkine, Australia's most powerful environmentalist (Minister Tony Burke) is siding with the mining corporations that rejected his Australian Heritage Council's recommendation that it be given National and ultimately World Heritage status in its entirety.

These days my 1973 devil's descendants face extinction along with the Tarkine wilderness that is their major refuge. Minister Burke and Labor, backed by the Liberals at state and federal level, have thrown open the Tarkine's remote natural realms to more than 50 mining exploration licence applications.

Burke has already given the go-ahead for the first mine. It will be an open-cut monstrosity one kilometre long, gouging the Tarkine to below sea level. Neither he nor the Tasmanian Labor Minister for the Environment was fussed that this mine will be in the long-established Tarkine Protected Area. Some protectors!

Meanwhile, unlike the US government-backed cavalry that rescued Yosemite from an assortment of land-grabbers more than a century ago, it is non-government champions that are rushing to the Tarkine's rescue. There's the newly-badged Save the Tarkine citizens' group (tarkine.org) headquartered in Burnie; wilderness photographer Chris Bell with a new book of Tarkine photographs (chrisbellphotography.com); and ecotourism firms such as Tarkine Trails (tarkinetrails.au) and the Corinna Wilderness Experience (corinna.com.au). Plus, of course, The Wilderness Society and Australian Greens campaigning at local, state and national level.

On 2 January 1816, Captain James Kelly and companions came ashore on a Tarkine beach muskets in-hand, recounting: "To our great astonishment we were accosted by six huge men, black natives, each of them above six feet high and very stout made…a spear in each of their right hands and two in their left…they appeared ready for war." Sensibly, Kelly's party retreated, leaving the beach to the Tarkiner warriors.

Now it is our turn to make ready for war. In 2013 we are challenged to keep the new wave of bulldozer-armed invaders out of this wild and threatened land.

Last September's protest against the Mt Lindsay mine

Photo: Rob Blakers

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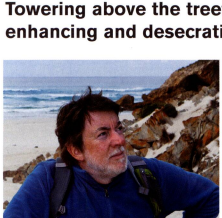
For every storm a rainbow

Towering above the treetops, *Quentin Chester* ponders the line between enhancing and desecrating our wilderness



My office is atop a 26-metre-high tower. About 300˚of the view from up here is ocean. All sorts of vessels pass by. Come winter, whales and even the occasional albatross drift in surprisingly close. The tower also gets a fair lash of weather. In a big blow, waves fill the air with salty haze. There are rainy afternoons when showers bridge the sky with rainbows.

I work at a lighthouse on Kangaroo Island's Cape Willoughby, a tower built from sturdy granite blocks with walls that are 1.4 metres thick at the base – this little bloke ain't budging anytime soon. I do a bit to take care of the place but my main job is to guide visitors around. And it's a terrific vantage point, with long views across open water – and back in time.

For me, working here is just about perfect. I get a dose of fresh air and exercise (it's 102 steps to the tower balcony) and I'm paid to prattle on about history. Plus, the elements and wildlife are always putting on a show.

Serious wilderness pundits would scoff at the cape. Look at all those roads and buildings they'd say. Then there's the farm paddocks and – OMG – the weeds! Okay, I admit, this spot is less than pristine. Yet there's no denying that we're parked on the edge of something big.

There's nothing like clouds and a rolling swell to entertain the eye, and time to contemplate the mysteries of the deep. A point I've often pondered while sat on the verandah is why people love old sites like mountain huts, landmark trees, cairns, campsites and – in my case – lighthouses.

Our tower has stood here for 161 years. It was built to guide ships through Backstairs Passage, the slender channel that has separated the island from the mainland for the past nine millennia. In his role as colonial treasurer, Charles Sturt – erstwhile explorer of the River Murray and parts inland – raised £4,000 to build this lighthouse and so secure SA's crucial link to Sydney and Melbourne.

No surprise then that my lighthouse spiel is mostly about ships and navigation. Besides the succession of lightkeepers (those crusty, old-salt types with a head for routine) there's the light itself. We started with oil-burning lanterns – 15 of the blighters. A pressurised kero light arrived in 1917, by the late 1950s a 1000-watt electric globe took over, then a couple of years ago we switched to a natty LED beacon. And we're still working.

There are people, much like train buffs or classic car enthusiasts, who get off on this saga. One of the highlights for this nuts-and-bolts brigade is our first-order Fresnel lens. It lived atop the tower – floating in 80 litres of mercury no less – from 1923 to 1974. This miraculous array of prisms and lenses kept turning through the night to punch a beam of light 42 kilometres out to sea.

We flirt with the idea of the 'untrodden' wilds but we cannot ignore that these places have a peopled past.

But we get all types, including ones smitten with the giddy solitude of these places. For these folk the cape is about melodrama; site of storms, ghosts and visions of ships splintering to smithereens on the rocks below. To them the lighthouse is part gothic romance, part Scooby Doo cartoon.

What gets to me though is the idea of lightkeepers and their families living this remote for so long. There's all the business about looking after the light, that nightly beacon that served as a warning and guide. Yet my attention is not so much on what people did here, as what the place did to the people.

It's all very well to lob into the wilds. Anyone can saunter about for a few days in snappy clothing with a bit of lightweight grub and a tiny tent. But what's it like to be out there week in, week out? How do you endure? How do you live without so much? More to the point, how do you learn to love these extremities?

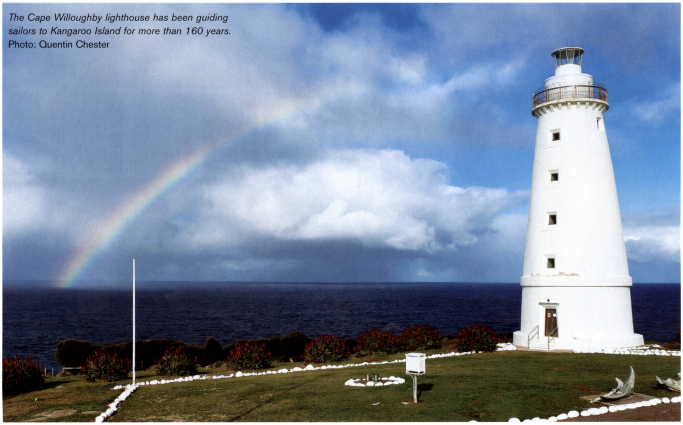
As a humble tour guide it's not my brief to speculate too wildly, but the lighthouse and its cottages do spark such questions. No matter what we are told about the olden days there's nothing like inhabiting a space – a venerable structure – to give heritage a bit of dazzle.

Here we arrive at a conundrum. It's tempting to think that raw, unspoilt nature should supply us tree-smoochers with as much inspiration as anyone could possibly crave. Look at the rampant beauty of it all. If you want history, well surely it's there in the ancient forests and time-worn stones.

Well, no actually. As much as remote terrain might feed the soul, there is a point where it's silly to pretend these spaces are somehow chaste, as if waiting to be exclusively ours. We flirt with the idea of the 'untrodden' wilds but we cannot ignore that these places have a peopled past. We're drawn to stories of pioneers and predecessors. We can't help it; we're born to connect.

For example, there's something uncanny about stepping into an old high country hut. It might be mid-winter and blizzarding outside but these smoke-grimed hideouts are much more than shelter. The rusting iron and greying timbers tie us to the experience of thousands who have darkened these doorways before. To stand at the hearth of Wallace's Hut on the Bogong High Plains and prop yourself against the finger-polished lip of the mantelpiece is to caress history.

It's a similar sensation when nestled under the deep, incut overhangs in the Kimberley. Resting there on cool ledges and scanning walls layered with the ochre artwork of the first Australians is hypnotic. The landscape might be one of the wildest left on planet but everywhere you wander there is radiant proof that humanity has lived and wandered this stone country for thousands of generations.



The Cape Willoughby lighthouse has been guiding sailors to Kangaroo Island for more than 160 years.
Photo: Quentin Chester

Even small encounters can trigger a twitch of recognition. I've felt it crossing rope bridges, as well as arriving at time-honoured campsites and summit cairns. The lonely peaks of the Flinders Ranges often sport these stone-stacked memorials. Some hold small containers stuffed with worn notebooks and scraps of paper, and it's a poignant moment when you read the handwritten names of bushwalking legends that scrabbled these ranges half a century before.

Of course not everyone shares this regard. Over the years a few wilderness purists have taken it upon themselves to demolish cairns in the Blue Mountains and elsewhere. In their eyes a humble pile of stones violates an ideal; a hygienic vision of a land 'forever sauvage'.

I know what they mean – sort of. On a recent walk along a favourite track, one of the big riverside stone slabs – a beautiful water-smoothed expanse – had been littered with sharp rocks. They'd been lifted from the slopes nearby and plonked down at random. Maybe it was just kids playing but it was hard not feel a rush of sadness and frustration.

So what's okay and what's not? It can be the wispiest of fine lines between desecration and celebration. What does seem safe to say is that anybody who carves a 'Wozza loves Shazza' heart in every gum tree they find is just being a knob. The act has no story or meaning we can access; it's a private declaration gone berserk.

No, for marks in the landscape to be the business they need to link us to a shared tradition. The structures that resonate have a grace and presence. That means they are 'of the place', evoking what the ancient Romans called 'genius loci'.

Stroll the highlands of Tibet and Nepal and you're constantly bumping into stone cairns and fluttering prayer flags perched in high villages and atop mountain passes. The power of these assemblages, where hundreds of mani stones have been inscribed with prayers in exquisite Tibetan script, is inescapable.

Such markers in the landscape give place a different depth. Nature is no longer a vacant, implacable space, but a shared domain. And the past has humanity; it becomes a world of heart, sinew and spirit. Suddenly our small journeys join a much longer story.

You don't have to share the same religious beliefs as Tibetan Buddhists to appreciate their devotion and how a union with place is manifest. Nor do you need to understand what rock art is 'about' to appreciate that it is cultured artistry on a grand scale. On a different tack, we may not be rapt in the idea of cattle grazing our alpine meadows but we can't erase that tradition, or deny the generations of cattlemen who built their huts and grew intimate with the high country.

For all its flaws, humanity gives us another pathway into the experience of place, a tale we can latch on to. Our various relics tell us about people trying to make their way in the world, that daily tussle with nature and the elements. Getting a taste of this past – that marrow of shared struggle – can't help but hit us with a dash of humility.

These past winters I've been lucky enough to see a couple of dozen southern right whales. It's always a thrill. The sting is that for the lighthouse's first 60 years one of the main fuels used in the lanterns was whale oil. In the nineteenth century more than 150 000 southern rights were hauled from the Southern Ocean. These beautiful animals were nearly driven to extinction. Now, mercifully, this species is slowly recovering, while the lighthouse tells both sides of the tale.

Perhaps that's why I never really tire of climbing the tower. When I look seaward I don't so much see empty ocean as a world teeming with ships and seabirds. I see desperate blokes in small boats hunting down creatures of the deep. I see the stories of lives lived, lost and changed forever.

The other odd thing is, I can't help but see the lighthouse in vaguely human terms. For me, he's one of those stouthearted figures from the past, a working man in a flat cap with a glint in his eye. W

A *Wild* contributor since issue no 3, *Quentin Chester* is a freelance journalist and the author of six books about wilderness places. Website: www.quentinchester.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/QuentinChester

Get set for WINTER

As winter approaches and we consider how well kitted out we are for the transition, *Wild* looks to long-serving outdoor outfitter Berghaus for inspiration

OUTDOOR CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT GIANT BERGHAUS, which was founded in the UK in 1966, has launched its Vapour Light collection in Australia.

Feedback from our friends suffering an unusually long winter across the pond is that the Vapour Storm jacket, which is designed to circulate air without letting in water, is the highlight of the range. Designed for multi-sport racing with the input of professional sportspeople and adventurers, the waterproof venting jacket is meant to keep the wearer cool and dry in the harshest conditions and features a slightly longer back than most. Made using the extra breathable Gore-Tex Active Shell fabric made available last year, the Vapour Storm jacket is due in Australian stores by July.

DID YOU KNOW?

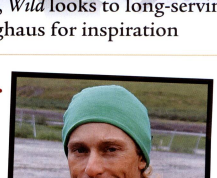
Berghaus-sponsored climber Leo Houlding successfully scaled Antarctica's Ulvetanna peak via a new route – the northeast ridge - earlier this year. Considered one of the last great climbs to be conquered, Houlding said the expedition involved 'a decade of dreaming, a year of planning, a month on the ice and a week on the wall in a landscape of endless white desert and giant rock fangs'.

The word from Alaska…

A recent addition to the Berghaus stable of young adventurers is Queenslander John Cantor (profiled in *Wild* issue 133). Cantor, who is planning to lead the first winter expedition across Alaska's Brooks Range next January, explained the importance of reliable gear when planning an ambitious journey.

Wild: How is training for your traverse going?
John Cantor: My expedition partner Evan Howard and I recently returned from a two-week recce in Alaska, where the aim was to test our gear and learn how to operate in extreme cold. Our thermometer stopped working at -34° C but we're expecting temperatures as low as -90° C including wind chill in January. The cold is like nothing I've experienced; you sweat while you ski so that the second you stop you're shivering. If you take off your facemask to eat, the condensation from your breath freezes it, and every morning the tent is full of ice for the same reason. I'm not a gear geek but the Berghaus down jacket I wear in Alaska, together with the windproof gloves and soft shell pants, have given me a lot of confidence about the expedition.

W: What do the local people, who use snow machines to get around in winter, think of you crossing the range on foot?
JC: My experience with the Inupiat (the people of northern Alaska) on this trip was very different to last year because it's unusual for white people to visit in winter and they were very concerned about us being out. We spent eight days out on the ice before returning to Kotzebue village briefly, and the locals were invaluable in our route planning.



They pointed out sections that are covered in heavy snow, which will definitely save us a few days, and agreed to do our food drops, which is fantastic because aircraft have real trouble flying up there. I feel a lot safer knowing we have their support.

W: How do you cope mentally with the physical challenges of the environment?
JC: We know that 90 per cent of the trip is going to be completely miserable but the 10 per cent of joy we experience when we become the first people to complete the traverse in winter will override it all. If we encounter too many storms it will greatly reduce our chances of making it all the way across the 1700 kilometres. It's because of the suffering that I am so proud of myself for persevering.

W: What's the appeal of the Brooks Range?
JC: Few people in Australia have heard of it, but with its huge mountains, isolation and unique wildlife there's really nowhere else like it. In January, the range will be teeming with thousands of caribou, as well as Arctic foxes, musk oxen, moose and lynx.

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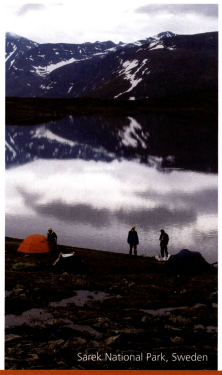

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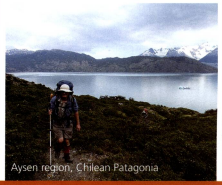

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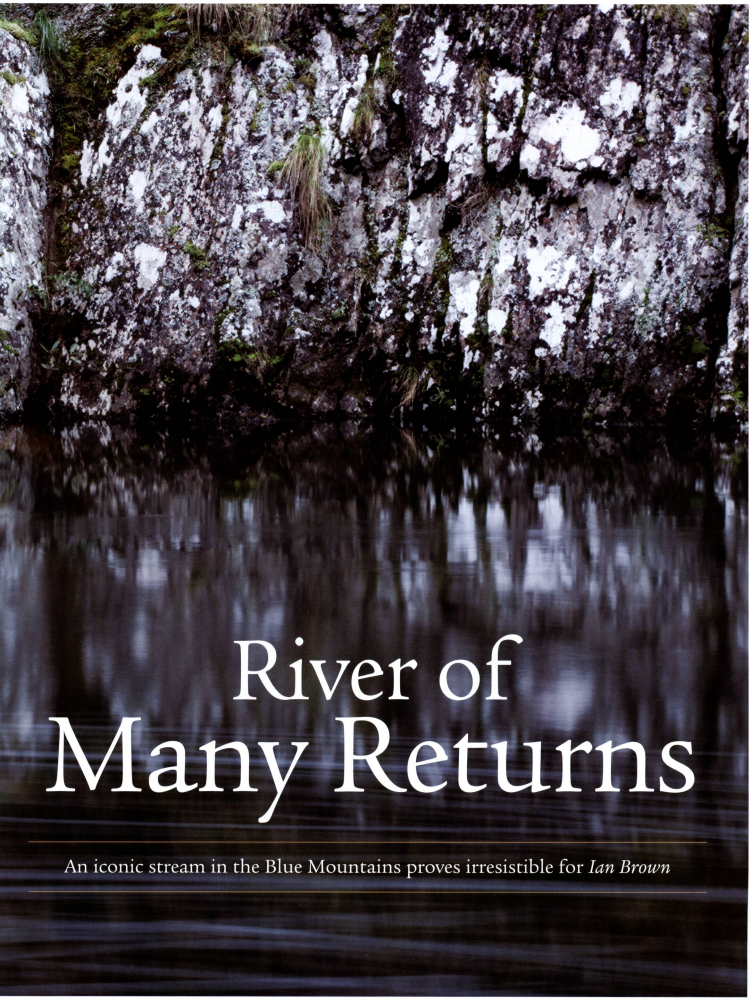


River of Many Returns

An iconic stream in the Blue Mountains proves irresistible for *Ian Brown*

There's something talismanic about the Kowmung. Any Blue Mountains walker needs to touch it every now and then. Some people have walked the entire length of the river. I still have at least 30 kilometres to see, even though I've walked in and out of the Kowmung Valley by two dozen different routes in the past 40 years. The years having somehow slipped by since I last visited the middle reaches, I find myself eagerly returning, to settle an old score if you will.

Sticks of mallee and banksia snatch at my over-large pack and rip my shirt. I'm wrestling shrubbery that encloses me from overhead, old and tall because it hasn't seen a fire since the vast blazes of the 1950s. I'm glad the old walkers' pad still parts the bush at leg height just enough to get through, and that the track has grown no deeper or wider in the past few decades. No bush philanthropist has felt the need to go chopping at the scrub, as they have elsewhere.

A sandstone edge appears ahead, and I burst out onto Pindari Top, not far from the Kanangra Walls road. Cool water fills little hollows, testament to yesterday's rain. In winter, such pools last for a few days at least. The air turns chill and a shivering wind blows lumpy clods of blue-and-white cumulus from the west. They pass overhead and evaporate in the east, forecasters having backed off on predictions of snow.

The cackles of wattlebirds ring out across the heath, and I notice yellow sprays of wattle beginning to appear. I swing my pack down to slurp at one of the rain-pools, remembering that spring will soon be upon the bush and the windblown she-oak will shed their rusted winter colours and burst with chlorophyll once more.

I turn to look over the Kanangra-Boyd Wilderness, the second largest wilderness in New South Wales and fiefdom of the wombat and lyrebird. The Blue Breaks range blue and gold across the eastern horizon. This is now the most remote country in the southern Blue Mountains, since Warragamba Dam flooded the Burragorang Valley in 1960 and cut off access from the east. Misguided and costly plans to raise the dam, to reduce downstream flooding, were reignited recently, meaning that 7500 hectares of this protected bushland could soon be inundated. Closer, but still beyond the wide blue gulf of the Kowmung valley, Mt Colong's flat top of basalt rises above the humbled plateau tops.

There are many fine and roomy places to go walking in the Greater Blue Mountains: the Wild Dog Mountains, Blue Labyrinth, Grose Valley, Gardens of Stone, the Colo River and vast Wollemi. But the Kowmung holds a special place in bushwalking heritage, and the landscape and history of the Blue Mountains. Perhaps only Blue Gum Forest exceeds the Kowmung's aura.

The river begins its named journey where the Hollanders and Tuglow rivers meet, gathering waters from the Central Tablelands and diving straight into the first of three long gorges on its way to join the Coxs River and Lake Burragorang. For some 80 kilometres it wends through a crinkled, blue-ridged wilderness of sandstone, granite and metamorphics, gathering clean water and strength, weaving a rich tapestry of terrain and life.

Crossing Pindari Top, I'm soon stepping awkwardly down the fern-muffled chasm of Wallaby Pass. When last I passed this way I was young, with indestructible knees. Of course I didn't appreciate any of that then. I also carried much smaller cameras.

Striding through the forest along the crest of the Colboyd Range is easier, despite the efforts of the so-called 'big wind' four weeks ago. The ground is strewn with a confetti of bark and leaves; broken limbs and whole trees snapped off and flung across the increasingly faint track. These trees have been growing up here for a long time.

With only half a day to spare, I can't go far. Scrambling around the cliff-edge of another sandstone top, I begin to doubt the reliability of my younger self. On the map I'd noted some 'two-star' overhangs for overnight shelter. When I finally find them, they're one-star at best. Who knew I was once such an optimist?

Still counting on the noted 'deep rockholes' for water, I tussle with some dense scrub across the top and enjoy an

The Kowmung valley deserves more than one roll of photographic film.

expansive afternoon view over Christys Creek to the Kowmung watershed on the Murruin Range. The lack of grinding grooves suggests that even the Gundungurra rarely came to this place. Christys is one of the largest Blue Mountains streams entirely contained within national park, with a clean catchment. It was almost certainly among the waterfalls below me that Francis Barrallier's gutsy attempt to 'cross the Blue Mountains' foundered in 1802. He was so close to the Boyd Plateau and success.

would lead me astray down to Mt Great Groaner — and follow the main ridge to Mt Le Tonsure. Such names. And they were witty, those pioneer walkers. Although Le Tonsure (referring to the cleanly shaved part of a monk's head) must have changed, because there's no sign of a fringe topped by bare pate. Maybe it's in the wrong place, I wondered, like so many names applied before topo maps were made.

When Myles Dunphy and his friends walked here in the early 1900s, they had to come in from Burragorang Valley in the

The lack of grinding grooves suggests that even the Gundungurra rarely came to this place.

After a windy, fitful night in my one-star cave hotel I'm up working through the bush again at first light, back to a remembered viewpoint on the northern tip of the mountain. It doesn't look a promising day for photographs, with an overcast sky after the five-second explosion of rising sun. And when I've set up the view camera I sit and wait, and wait, while my limbs are gradually frozen. I cower from the wind behind a rock, only dashing out to make sure the tripod doesn't fall over, and an hour later decide to make the most of the average light.

By mid-morning I'm heading for the river — watching for the misstep that

east, or from Jenolan Caves. There was no Kanangra Walls Road, just a cattle track joining Burragorang to Oberon across the Kanangra Tops and Boyd Plateau.

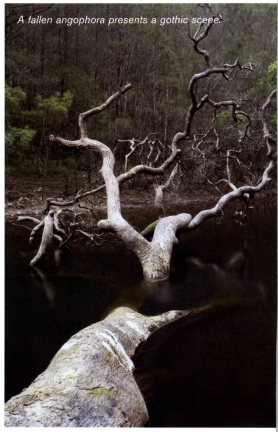
I lunch on Arabanoo Peak, under a grove of singing she-oaks (the wind-whisperers of the bush). Then, having walked this ridge a few times before, I take a new spur direct into Arabanoo Creek. It's steep and rocky, so the knees are giving me curry, but I can see that both wombats and pigs have been here before me. In my youth, when I was the national park ranger for this swathe of mountains and more, I was silly enough to suggest in writing that feral pigs seemed to be making little headway and perhaps it wasn't good country for them. I've never lived it down.

Arabanoo Creek: multi-coloured stones, pure water and white petals of sassafras. There are stinging nettles and native raspberry too, lest I be accused of being too starry-eyed, not to mention cedars with their bare deciduous branches reaching up into the wedge of sky above the creek-bed. A lone river oak tells me it's not too far to the Kowmung. The creek courses back and forth all over the shop through convulsions of quartzite, never taking just one kilometre when three will do. Once, I followed it all the way down from Kanangra Walls and thought I'd never get to the end; it took the whole day.

This time, I'm worryingly exhausted. I pass some gorgeous groves of moss-cowled rocks and myrtle too late for a photo stop – noted for next time. Christys Creek joins in, then river. I cross quickly, knee-high but spine-chilling, and hurry along the easier bank to get near Sunrise and Sunset Bluffs before camping.

Once before I tried to traverse Bulga-Denis Canyon, the long middle gorge of the river. I came in summer, the quick way, straight down Cambage Spire to the Christys junction, inflated my airbed and floated gaily down until a sharp stick poked its nose in. My craft was unrepairable, at least then and there. I packed the useless slug away and began scrambling along the gorge, which was difficult. A thunderstorm

Memories of luxurious camping spots prove unreliable for the writer.



A fallen angophora presents a gothic scene.

moved in and the rain came down. It never stopped. The rocks were incredibly slick. I looked at the map, climbed back up the next spur, over Great Stony Mountain and all the way back to the car before dark, with a four-day pack and wet airbed, in the rain, utterly spent.

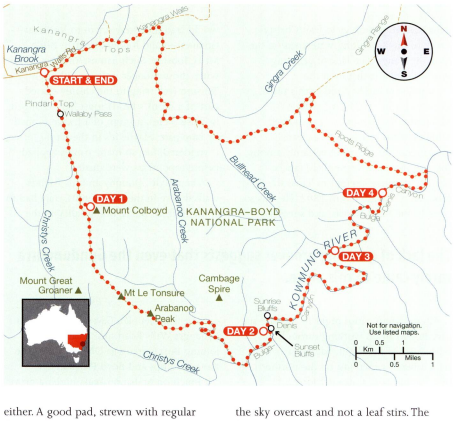
Decades later, I'm finally back. As the river turns against a mammoth cliff on one side, I realise I was near the point where I'd come unstuck before, and the light is fading. I hobble along some steep rocks – at least dry this time – and strike an impassable bluff. Not about to start swimming, I decide it might just be possible to squeeze along the base of the cliff on the other side of the river, with some hard climbing. I walk back towards a rapid and camp on a patch of grass despite the chiggers – those tiny but dastardly mites with a taste for human flesh — and wonder if I can handle another 10 kilometres.

But in the morning, after a crossing, a wade along the cliff and a short but strenuous rock traverse to keep out of deeper water, the going eases off. For two short days the gorge is an enjoyable mix of travel. But I'd forgotten how long a river mile is. One minute I'm scrambling through cuboid rocks filigreed in grey lichens, the next I'm striding along open flats of native meadow grass. No blackberry – the national parks people deserve credit for a rigorous control effort. My alarm that a rampant vine is the dreaded cape ivy builds and builds, before I happily spy native passionfruit flowers.

I return to the river's edge and see a huge black beast splashing in the water. A bunyip?

The trees form a menagerie of form and colour: forest red gum, rough-barked apple, river oaks dappled with green lichens, forest oak, water gum, grey myrtle, sandpaper fig, red cedars, native peach, and occasionally the staunch pillar of a kurrajong. Each species with its own distinctive character and preferences, sometimes gathered together with others of their kind, elsewhere mixed up in a multicultural mêlée. Some of the oldest water gums reveal a deep history: massive burly boles topped by a spray of young branches, every previous effort at upward growth smashed off by the floods.

I'm only forced to climb high once, caught out on the wrong side with no way down to a crossing. But the wombats see me through; I guess they don't like to swim or climb higher than absolutely necessary



either. A good pad, strewn with regular droppings as reassurance, leads up and up and then along sneaky ledges between bluffs, then slowly down again. I realise this is far too easy, just before arriving at a burrow and the end of the trail. I then have to bumble my way back down to the river without marsupial guidance.

The gorge is rich in photographic opportunities and I can barely pick up my pack before another fine scene appears. I hardly make any progress at all, so it's just as well I had only planned to travel a few kilometres each day. The river crossings alone, which I manage to limit to about nine, are cold enough to freeze the nuts off the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

I never actually see a wombat, but if pads, burrows and droppings are anything to go by, they're here in their dozens, holding their own against the pigs. I wonder how they cope with the chiggers.

At one point in my perambulations I return to the river's edge and see a huge black beast splashing in the water. A bunyip? The horrible shape suddenly forms into a floundering swamp wallaby, and I wonder if it's me that has scared the daylights out of it. The wallaby struggles to clamber out, as wet and slick as a seal, with its limbs poorly adapted for climbing over boulders.

Later, close to dusk, I'm happily chugging along a wombat pad when two burly wallaroos bound straight for me along the track, one after the other. I prepare to be stomped into the ground, but they veer off at the last moment, like spooks from a ghost train.

On my last morning the river is muffled, the sky overcast and not a leaf stirs. The ferns and grasses glisten from overnight showers but I get to work early in case the sun breaks through. I'm taken by a pattern of slowly moving swirls of white foam on the darkness of a backwater. I watch hypnotised as they keep changing shape, and so the compositional effect. The only sounds are the main river rattling nearby and a lyrebird going through its song list.

I've always felt there's something mystical about a river: its vitality as the fluid of life; the way it speaks of the country it has travelled; the dynamism; how the water is always moving and yet looks the same. Each constituent rapid and eddy is constantly changing its shape, even though the accumulation of all those movements is to sustain the same downstream flow. After a while I see that every now and then some more interesting swirls spin through the eddy. I set up the camera, wait, and take my chances.

Next, a fallen angophora catches my eye. It has toppled across the river, almost reaching the far side of a silent pool. Lifeless, leafless and bleached, it reveals the curling branches so characteristic of the species, better than any living tree could. One attenuated limb points skywards like a skeletal fingerbone.

Despite my photographic session, I manage to get away before ten. It would be a hard day, hauling back up to the plateau. Just the first rise, up to the old cattle track on the crest of the Gingra Range, is 600 metres. Kanangra Tops is another 200 metres higher. With a few dips and dives along the way, it would be near to the

Around every bend awaits a new hypnotic view of the river.

tonne. Still, the gentle Roots Ridge is one of the easiest spurs out of the river. And there'd be no chiggers up there.

I set off up the hill at a pace I hope to keep the whole way, as a cheerful pardalote helpfully chirps out the metronomic rhythm of my plod. I was last this way in 1986, on a day walk with Bob Carr, then the NSW environment minister. Both as premier and minister Carr did much for conservation, notably by supporting World Heritage status for the Blue Mountains and deciding not to raise Warragamba Dam and flood the lower gorge of the Kowmung. A fast walker, he strode ahead and avoided idle chitchat. I suppose politicians must get tired of always talking, which must be difficult now he's our foreign minister.

I don't find the track at first, but it shows up as the spur narrows to the spine of a tall bluff falling straight to the river. Myles Dunphy wrote that the only track worth walking on was one that brushes your legs. I guess it depends on what's doing the brushing. Here, the track is just a pad of crushed gum leaves winding through a thick sward of grass. The Kowmung valley is its own rain shadow and the lowers slopes a delightful, semi-arid forest of red gum and ironbark with almost no scrub.

I drop my pack and head for the cliff's edge to take in a grand vista of the river. Its path through the gorge can be seen wriggling around lower spurs within the larger valley, still cutting its way into the hard rocks. The dull grey crowns of forest red gums stand out, and here and there the yellow splash of wattles. Soon the rock orchids will be sending out their own flower spikes. River time, comfortingly, is not human time; the river will go on flowing and changing.

Having already used all my photographic film, and smelling my sweat-soaked canvas, I turn back up the hill. Some places just demand your return. W

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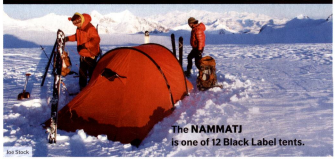

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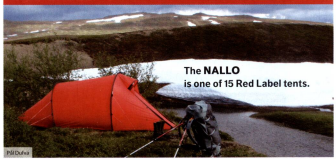

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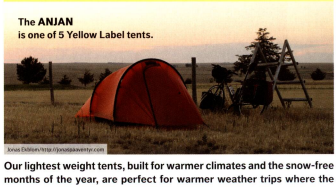

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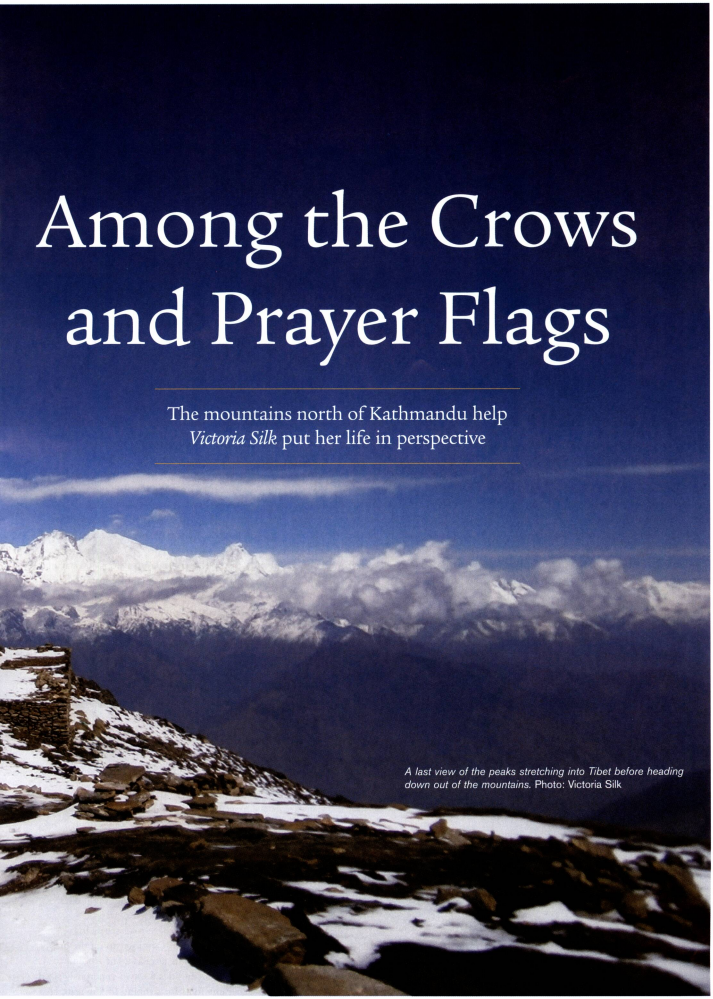
Among the Crows and Prayer Flags

The mountains north of Kathmandu help *Victoria Silk* put her life in perspective



A last view of the peaks stretching into Tibet before heading down out of the mountains. Photo: Victoria Silk

It's as if someone has turned the page of a pop-up book to spring up these vast monoliths.

The highest point of the 8-day trek at 4610 metres.
Photo: Martin Silk

It's still early morning when we set off behind the burdened porters. A late announcement of a strike in Kathmandu the night before had brought our departure time forward by two and a half hours, but after a surprisingly quick journey through city backstreets we find ourselves at the starting point of the Sundarijal teahouse.

An uneven staircase leads us through the upper reaches of the village. Not an eyebrow is raised as we pass numerous locals heading down. I'm thankful for my trainers but already awestruck at the burgeoning array of footwear confidently walking the rocky path.

Within half an hour we're at the entrance to the Shivapuri National Park. Our four porters, cook and two cooks boys are waved through, while our guide Hira and his assistant Purna wait for our paperwork to be checked.

Off again and our first descent is accompanied by the screams of errant monkeys in the trees above. The path continues through broadleaf forest before breaking out into clearer ground once more and the next village.

The porters chat happily to local children while they wait for us to catch up, and it occurs to me that children play the same games the world over. Girls aged six or seven squeal and giggle during an elaborate roleplay while a three-year-old boy amuses himself with a car-type toy consisting of a stick, some pipe and bottle tops.

I'm flooded with sadness, incredulity and wonder as I watch him play, annoyed that previous visitors to Nepal had failed to tell me to bring some matchbox cars for the children. What a simple yet wonderful thing to be able to do.

Despite a couple of tea stops and having relaxed into the rhythm of the walk, I am nevertheless delighted to kick off my shoes and enjoy the picnic laid out for us in a disused army barracks.

Not long after lunch I catch my first breathtaking glimpse of the high peaks – stunning for someone who has never seen a mountain over 5000 metres. They appear to be not of the land but of the sky. The guides can read the shock on my face and delight in it.

We make camp on the far side of Chisopani village just after 5 pm, leaving most tourists behind. It begins to dawn on me that we are now walking a path less travelled: the tented trek. With the growth of teahouses along popular routes, tented treks are becoming fewer and fewer.

The decline in tented itineraries, as Ashok of Tansen Treks tells me, has resulted in less work for porters and cooks, whereas our trip provides nine men with eight days' work.

Since we still have road access to Kathmandu, our camp set-up on the grassy terraced hillside attracts a fair amount of onlookers. Besides the two generously sized A-frame tents for sleeping in, the team also

There was a bit of debate as to whether it was possible to see Everest from this high point in Thadepati – the couple waited and they did.

sets up a larger dining tent and toilet tent. I wince at the thought of one poor porter lugging a toilet seat when I am entirely comfortable with digging my own al fresco lavatory, but decide to make the most of this luxury.

During the first few warm nights I find it hard to understand the necessity of the dining tent, but this would be a much-loved haven in the cooler nights to come.

On day four we reach Thadepati at 3690 metres, just as heavy snowfall begins. While porters wait for the weather to ease, we decide to spend the night in a nearby teahouse, playing cards and reading in the relatively warm common room.

It begins to dawn on me that we are now walking a path less travelled: the tented trek.

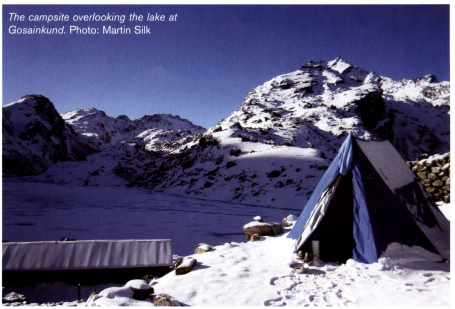
I meet 11-year-old Sunita, with eyes as bright as a button and a smile to match. I am humbled observing her clothes; weathered woolen trousers rolled up at the ankle, a once-pink fleece and one and a half sandals. She lives on a ridge exposed to heavy winds and snow, yet she wears no socks. The nearest village with a school is at least six hours away on foot. And her modest home holds less appeal for passing hikers than the other two teahouses in her hamlet. During the 24 hours we spend with Sunita, due to my husband Martin suffering a migraine, I realise the 300 metres between her teahouse and the other more profitable ones is a terribly significant distance.

Again I kick myself for not being better mentally and practically prepared for this trek. I had plenty of gear, but what did I have to give to this young girl with hands weathered far beyond my own? It is only watching Martin shriek mock outrage at Sunita's superior paper aeroplane flying skills and the two of them laugh together that it occurs to me, giving her the chance to simply be a child may itself be a gift.

The next morning, Martin stuck in bed with a dehydration headache, I climb the short distance to the chorten (a dome-shaped monument decorated with Buddhist prayer flags) for a view of the place in clearer visibility.

Earlier in the trip, we had run into a French climber whose attempt to climb Langtang Lirung had been thwarted by the weather and a recent death on the peak. Here on his 20–something visit to Nepal, he insisted we would see Everest the next day.

A beautifully haunting chorten sitting high above the village of Thadepati. Photo: Martin Silk



The campsite overlooking the lake at Gosainkund. Photo: Martin Silk

After clearing my head amid the crows and prayer flags — not concerned about seeing Everest this morning — I head back to camp.

'Did you speak to your baby?' our guide Hira enquires. I had not even thought to take my mobile. Smiling at me, understanding that I had found the peace I needed on the ridge, Hira says: 'Didi (sister), we will go up again soon so I can ring my wife.'

I had prepared myself, and my mother at home with our two-year-old, to be out of mobile phone range for the eight days of the trek. But we only encounter a few holes in coverage, and often this is rectified by a short climb to the nearest highpoint.

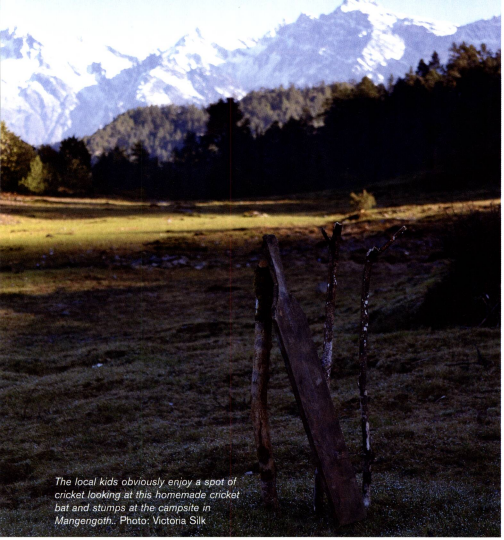
I breakfast alone, realising that a late start and short day would be the best thing for Martin.

When I spot Sunita I grab my Crocs from inside and present them to her as a gift. Any feelings of awkwardness are immediately dissipated by the look of joy on her face and seeing her kick off those old sandals.

As the sun warms the air and earth, I spy a range of mountains that was previously veiled from view. It's as if someone has turned the page of a pop-up book to spring up these vast monoliths.

We follow the ridgeline to the highest point and Hira begins a role call of the distant peaks. Cho Oyu, Makalu…and then the undeniable shape of Everest and Lhotse. Even from this great distance she stands out, a pyramid of rock, dark and distinct, captivating. It is not hard to imagine being lost in her spell. It is at precisely this moment that my camera runs out of battery, but somehow that seems apt; these experiences belong to this place and are no less real without digital evidence. In this sacred place, looking out at that sacred mountain, filled with emotion after making a small difference to the daily life of an 11-year-old girl, I can live entirely in the present.

Martin bravely hauling himself out of bed, porters shouldering their loads, we wave



The local kids obviously enjoy a spot of cricket looking at this homemade cricket bat and stumps at the campsite in Mangengoth.. Photo: Victoria Silk

goodbye to Sunita (wearing her new Crocs) and set off to resume our trek. I feel sad to leave our newfound friend and resolve to do whatever it takes to leave her with photos of us together.

Dhupi Chaur, a beautiful perch, is marked on the map perhaps only because of its helipad. The welcome sound of the pressure cooker greets our arrival and we tuck into some of the cook's excellent soup. I vow that my own soups will one day be as good as Ringi the cook's — clear but packed with flavour.

The track is relentless but the hearty lunch gives us the vigour we need for a solid afternoon's trekking. Not usually the way we approach a walk, there is something about the day that has us pushing for the finish line. We enjoy some snowy downhills, leaning back on our heels to slide down quickly like the guides.

It's shortly before 5 pm when we reach the teahouses of Phedi. Again perched on what seemed an impossible ledge, Phedi's notoriety stems from its location overlooking the site of the 1992 Thai airbus crash that killed 113 people. A piece of molten metal mounted on a plinth stands testament to the tragedy, the onset of darkness adding to the haunted atmosphere.

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- Distress beacons should only be used in life-threatening situations.
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We start early the following day – the day of the high pass. At 3730 metres we have 880 metres to climb in the morning, before descending the other side to Gosainkund. We power up the first 400 metres and stop for lemon tea, and a macho chin-up competition, at a teahouse under construction. Needless to say, spirits are high, and not only among the porters who can relax knowing the uphill part of the trek will be complete in another 400 metres.

I'm able to cope with the blistering wind because the sun is beating down, and I'm trekking in Nepal at long last with my husband by my side.

We head over the pass marked with strings of prayer flags, and down the other side toward the sacred lake of Gosainkund. The porters roll out our thick roll mats in a sheltered, sunny nook by the frozen waters and we settle in for a lunchtime feast. Once satiated I can hardly help but fall into glorious slumber in full view of our bemused entourage.

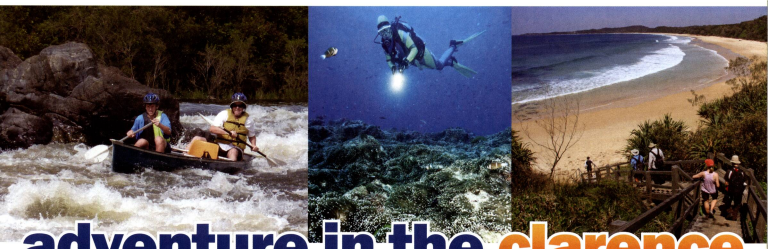
The night brings with it heavy snow but looking up at the sky I feel like I can see galaxy upon galaxy of stars. It quite literally takes my breath away.

Leaving Gosainkund, I begin contemplating what I have discovered during this trek. I feel like I've discovered a hidden gem in the Helambu and Langtang region, but only just scratched the surface. As Martin pick Hira's brain about the surrounding peaks, he seeds the ideas for new journeys. The one thing we can bank on is that we will camp again — this element makes the experience.

When I tell Hira I wish my camera could print Polaroids that I could give to the families we meet along the way, he kindly offers to deliver prints of my photos when he next walks this trek. Back in Kathmandu, I parcel up some pink tracksuit pants, hair accessories and a comb for Sunita, with a photo of Martin and her. The idea of her enjoying a colourful, unexpected package gives me great satisfaction.

On the drive back to the airport Martin and I enjoy the chat with Hira that people who are heading back to such different lives can have. We talk about issues that translate across our cultures, such as the welfare of children and the longevity of our jobs. And as we say goodbye, with tears in our eyes, he lays a khata, or traditional scarf, about my neck. 'Goodbye Didi. I hope you will be back soon'. So do I Hira. W

angourie broomshead copmanhurst glenreagh grafton iluka maclean minniewater nymboida ulmarra wooli yamba



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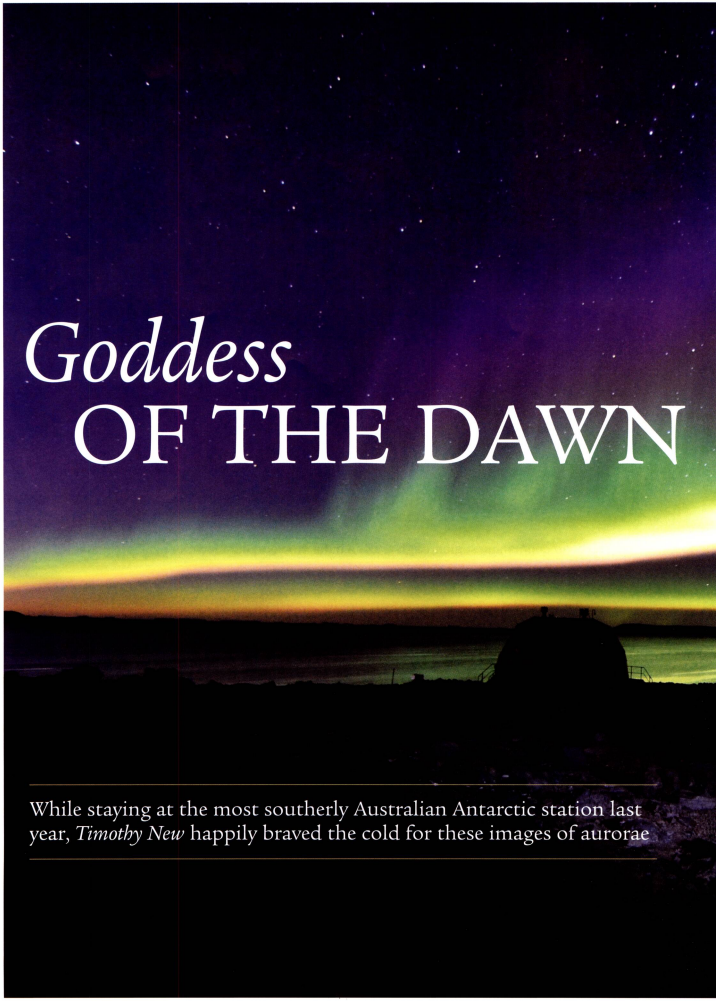
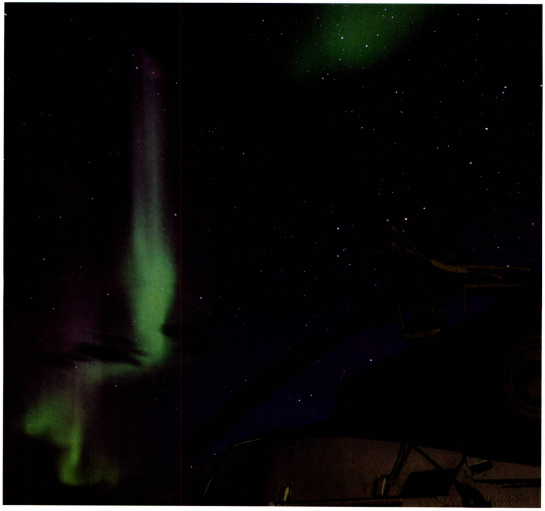


Goddess OF THE DAWN

While staying at the most southerly Australian Antarctic station last year, *Timothy New* happily braved the cold for these images of aurorae



Clockwise from left: *The Southern Lights and a Squirrel helicopter; Banding illuminates the icy waters of the Southern Ocean; Aurora in the style of a genie escaping from a bottle: The meterology building at Davis Station.*

Timothy New is a builder for the Australian Antarctic Division. Now based in Tasmania, his favourite photographic subjects include surfers and seal pups. He has also travelled through Cambodia photographing Khmer architecture and most recently had his work published in *Wild* issue 130.

The best images require the best and often bulkiest apparatus

Michael Dillon

Belinda Smith meets the man on the other side of the lens

There are names synonymous with mountaineering. Sir Edmund Hillary, Tim Macartney-Snape, Lincoln Hall – they've all achieved extraordinary feats accompanied by masses of media coverage that goes with the territory, but one name is often overlooked: Michael Dillon. Without Mike, there would be no footage of Hillary's Ganges expedition, no record of Macartney-Snape's sea to summit climb, and little of Hall's almost-fatal 2006 Everest mission. Think of a major mountaineering event in the past 30 years; there's a good chance Mike was there. If a picture is worth a thousand words, cameraman Mike Dillon has captured tomes of Himalayan history.

I first met Mike earlier this year in Bright, Victoria, where he gave a presentation at the Adventure Travel Film Festival. The unseasonably stormy weather wreaked havoc on the electronic equipment in the humid marquee; as such, the projector packed it in and Mike was forced to conduct an impromptu Q&A while the offending machine was fixed. Unexpectedly thrust into the spotlight, Mike quietly but confidently fielded questions from behind his microphone. Softly spoken, dressed in David Attenborough-esque garb – blue shirt, chinos – and with a cropped mop of greying curls, you'd be forgiven for thinking he was a school teacher, or maybe a counsellor, except he regaled the audience with stories about the time he had to wrap Sir Ed in a tent and help to drag him down a Himalayan peak, or the trials of filming inquisitive apes in the Congo and the devastation of palm oil plantations. He's a founding director of the Australian Himalayan Foundation, a fellow of the Royal Geographic Society, the first Australian to win the Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award. He is also a member in the General Division of the Order of Australia for services to the Australian film industry as a pioneer in adventure and mountain film cinematography, and to the community through support for international humanitarian work. Yet he remains relatively anonymous.

Mike was born and raised in Sydney, but unlike many adventurers, his immediate family wasn't particularly outdoorsy – he gained a love of the wilderness through other means.

'Between a very good scoutmaster who used to take us rock climbing and canyoning and so on, and the outdoor aspects of the Duke of Edinburgh Award, I had a fantastic exposure to the outdoors

After making his first film, Dillon didn't let his lack of mountaineering experience hold him back.

while I was still at school,' he tells me after the festival. 'I had excellent mentors in those two fields, and both contributed a lot to the fact that soon after I left school I went to New Zealand to do a mountaineering course.'

In 1970 Mike went on the second Australian commercial trip into the Everest region, which proved to be his first foray into filmmaking.

'The leader of that trip, Warwick Deacock, had been commissioned by the ABC to take a bit of footage,' Mike says. 'He got sick and had to be carried out on the stretcher but he was still filming, even being carried. Finally I asked him, "Could I have a go?" That was my first use of a 16-millimetre camera. Two years after that I went with him again to the Annapurna region with the aim of making my first documentary film.'

It was a steep learning curve (Mike sat on and broke his light meter) but he recorded footage of an activity that had never been filmed before and *A Himalayan Journey* was broadcast on the ABC, BBC, and Swiss, Dutch, Danish and Japanese television. Despite its success, this first documentary didn't quite make ends meet, so Mike started Himalayan Film Festivals in Sydney and Melbourne before hearing that Sir Edmund Hillary was planning a journey up the Ganges and looking for a film crew.

'I wrote to him and said I'd only made one film but it was on a Himalayan trek and I'd also been trekking in the Everest region, had my own film equipment and was prepared to do it for nothing,' he says.

'Strangely enough, I thought there'd be hundreds of people writing to him with CVs a lot better than mine, but only one other person wrote to him – an avant garde filmmaker. At the last minute, TVNZ wanted to film it but by then, they decided to go with me. So there I was, with another expedition member as the sound recordist, preparing to film what Hillary has always regarded as his favourite expedition.'

The *From the Ocean to the Sky* expedition involved taking jetboats up 1500 kilometres of Ganges on the plains, around two weeks getting up rapids and waterfalls, and another three weeks of trekking and climbing up to a symbolic end of the journey on an Indian Himalayan peak. It also initiated a long friendship between the two men.

'He saw me work for three months and that I tried really hard to do a good job,' he says. 'I had done the basic course in New Zealand but this was my first serious climb and I was carrying a fair bit of gear. I was a liability in a sense – I was the least experienced climber, so I was roped up with Edmund. As it turned out, it was his last Himalayan climb.

'I was a liability in a sense – I was the least experienced climber, so I was roped up with Edmund.'

'The film turned out really well, then he started to talk about other projects, how he'd like his work in Nepal filmed, and also to do some mini adventures with the younger generation.

'He was in his early 60s when I first filmed him in Nepal and I last filmed him when he was just about 80. I spent real quality time with him at work, seeing his amazing relationship with the people of Everest and doing a few little treks in the region to make our films more interesting.'

Over the next seven years, after filming

Sometimes the locals believe they can take a better photo.

Beyond Everest about Hillary's work in Nepal, Mike went to Mt Cook, Mt Kilimanjaro, Fiji and back to Everest before being approached by the then-unknown team of Tim Macartney-Snape, Lincoln Hall, Greg Mortimer, Geoff Bartram and Andy Henderson, who wanted him to accompany their attempt on Everest in 1984.

Mike explains: 'At the last minute, it was Kerry Packer – being a bit of a gambler – who decided to fund the whole expedition, so it ended up as a Channel Nine film.'

The finished product, *Everest – The Australian Assault*, still raises goosebumps today. The calm, controlled manner and good humour of the climbing team is captured beautifully by Mike, as are huge, sweeping vistas of the region.

'There was something about that team,' Mike says, after a pause. 'It was just five people. I still don't know who the leader was. There was no official leader. We all had vegetarian food, because some of them were vegetarian, and I don't remember a single argument. Everyone was of the one mind and no one raised their voice. It was all done very quietly and without any fuss. Having read about lots of other expeditions I know that's an unusual situation, but I think everyone had the same sort of personality. There were no prima donnas.'

It wasn't all smooth sailing, though. The film highlighted the dangers inherent in an Everest attempt – not just the risk of cerebral oedema and frostbite (with footage of Andy's gloves being cut away to reveal heavily frostbitten digits; all except a thumb were later amputated), but also the avalanches that crashed down from the previously unscaled North Face. One such avalanche buried a stash of gear, some of which was never recovered.

'It was all their climbing boots and a lot of other stuff as well. We dug a very big hole and it took all our energy to do it.' Mike sighs with the memory. 'I remember just trying to walk from one place to another was really sapping because we weren't really acclimatised at that stage. Maybe it was about four hours of digging the world's highest hole, which was also dangerous because there was a lot of Everest straight above us and we were prone to other avalanches.'

On summit day, Mike filmed the climbers from a camp below and Macartney-Snape took a small camera to the top. While Mike has plenty of mountaineering experience, he's never made a big summit. 'I'd like to see the final few metres to a summit,' he says with a laugh. That trip did, however, fertilise an idea that had been growing in his head since he filmed Hillary's *From the Ocean to the Sky*.

'[Everest in 1984] was an extraordinary climb with an extraordinary performance from Tim who was able to not only climb to the summit the steepest way – a new route – without oxygen, but also have the energy when he got there to do some filming and speak for half an hour into a tape recorder about the state of the planet and we should do about it. I knew he had energy left when he got the summit so I asked him "What if Everest was 200 metres higher? Would you have still managed it?" and he thought he would have. Then I thought you can't climb higher, so what if he started lower?

'I was with Dick Smith in Nepal when I said to Tim "No one's really climbed Everest because it's measured from sea level, and no one's climbed it from sea level" which was a bit of a joke, but Dick thought that was a great idea. Tim, having climbed Everest only a few months before, didn't commit himself but Dick said that if Tim was crazy enough to do it, he'd be crazy enough to fund it.'

That film, *Everest – Sea to Summit*, won international awards. I ask, given the success of the trip, if he should get some credit for the naming of Tim's outdoor gear company. 'I should have registered the name,' he laughs.

While mountaineering and climbing documentaries may be Mike's specialty, he has also (to name but a few) filmed a taxi trip from London to Sydney (*A Fare to Remember*), supplied footage of a mahogany glider for David Attenborough's *State of the Planet*, and shot a number of 'wild' films – *Wild Asia*, *Wild Indonesia*, *Wildest Antarctica* and *Wildest Arctic*. He has been part of the world's highest dinner party atop Mt Huascarán in the Peruvian Andes (where

the malaria he contracted three months earlier in Papua New Guinea again reared it ugly head), and his favourite country is India ('You need 100 pairs of eyes to see it all', he says). In 2007, Mike accompanied Tim Cope for a few weeks of his three-year, 10 000-kilometre journey crossing the Eurasian steppe on horseback, through Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine and Hungary. The result, *On the Trail of Genghis Khan*, won international acclaim.

'I watched *Everest – Sea to Summit* when I was 15 and thought, "Wow, who is this filmmaker?" Tim Cope later tells me. 'So when I got funding from the ABC [to make the documentary] I tracked him down.

'He's dedicated and is prepared to do things on spec for stories that he believes in – something quite rare for cameramen of his ilk. On my journey, not only was he unobtrusive, but well-liked by the local people, and of course embraced by my dog Tigon.'

Mike thinks his naturally quiet personality forms a large part of his success: 'I'm not an extrovert – I don't mind being there, silent – and I think it helps.'

He has also been fortunate to avoid major tragedies on his journeys, with the closest call being Lincoln Hall's near-fatal Everest climb in 2006. The exhausted Sherpas told the team waiting below that Lincoln had died, and were ordered to leave him so that their own deaths not be added to the toll.

Mike rang Lincoln's wife Barbara with the news. But the following morning, when Lincoln was found alive by a team making a summit attempt, news of his survival sent ripples through the camp below.

'It was pretty amazing,' Mike says to camera in the documentary *I Shouldn't Be Alive: Left for Dead on Everest*. 'We were still in a state of shock – we hadn't taken in Lincoln's death, and now we had this extra news to take in, that Lincoln wasn't dead.'

Braving all weather conditions is the norm for an expedition photographer

'I've been a bit lucky as no one has died on any expedition I've been on – well, no one's stayed dead.'

Today, Mike tells me: 'I suppose I've been a bit lucky as no one has died on any expedition I've been on – well, no one's stayed dead on any expedition I've been on,' he corrects himself. 'I haven't had that first hand trauma that quite a few Australian mountaineers have had.'

Despite potential dangers, Mike encourages adventure filmmaking and is happy to impart words of wisdom. 'Physically, it's easy to make documentaries now,' he says.

On sound: 'You've got to have a good microphone on the camera. Sound is as important as the image. I always buy a little directional microphone that points forward, rather than the one in the camera that can be affected by wind.'

To avoid shaky, seasickness-inducing scenes: 'Use the camera like a pair of human eyes. Record in wide angle, and if you want to get closer, walk in closer and take the shot.'

Getting the shot: 'You can't foresee the future – film everything, and take a spare everything.'

He certainly isn't showing any signs of slowing down. Plans this year include repeating a walk across the Simpson Desert for charity, and trekking the Kokoda Track. Although Mike has experienced many highs and lows akin to those of seasoned expeditioners, his views remain simple. 'I've had lot of good experiences with lots of good people,' he shrugs. 'As Edmund Hillary said, "It's not the size of the adventure that matters. The important thing is that you have them".' W

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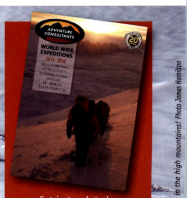

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Digby rattles along 'At the High Mountains!' Photo: James Hamilton

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Himalayan Highs
PART 2

In the second part of his survey of Australian expeditions in the Himalayas, *Zac Zaharias* details climbs made from 2009 to 2011

Geoff Robb returning to Camp 3, circa 7200m in the Japanese Couloir of Gasherbrum I.

The years between 2006 and 2011 were busy ones for Australian mountaineers, accounting for 60 per cent of all Mt Everest ascents by Australians (47 ascents, including third ascents by Duncan Chessell and Tashi Tenzing). And that's even before counting the popular commercial peaks of Cho Oyu and Ama Dablam, with 15 and 28 Australian ascents respectively.

And there are many highlights of the 2009, 2010 and 2011 expeditions recorded here. May 2009 marked the first Australian ascent of the 6328-metre Mt Saribung, followed by Andrew Lock's crowning as the first Australian to climb all 14 mountains measuring at least 8000 metres in October and the first ascent of the 7128-metre Mt Himlung in November.

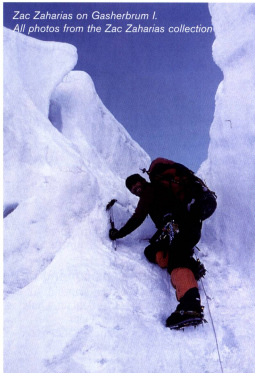
2010 proved a busy year, with the first Australian ascents of Putha Hiunchuli and Yangma Peak, as well as a whopping nine Everest attempts including a successful summit by six Australians from the same expedition.

The following year saw eight successful summits of Everest, most by the southeast ridge, in addition to the fourth Australian climb of Mt Lhotse.

During this period, Australians also tried to find new routes and chose difficult existing ones, were battered by bad weather, and suffered the loss of Mick Parker (d.2009) and Lincoln Hall (d.2012).

What we cannot fail to notice is that more and more Australians are experiencing the challenge of climbing the highest peaks on the planet, often travelling with commercial operators and always doing it in style. W

Zac Zaharias on Gasherbrum I. All photos from the Zac Zaharias collection



WILD SURVEY - *AUSTRALIAN HIMALAYAN CLIMBS 2009-2011

* Does not inlcude expeditions to Cho Oyu and Ama Dablam

YEAR	PEAK, ROUTE	PARTY MEMBERS	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
2009	Urkinmang (6151m), W ridge, Nepal	Steven Williamson and Ostiane Massiani (NZ).	Williamson and Massiani reached 5500m on 31 Jan.	
	Baruntse (7168m) E Nepal, SE Ridge	Christine Burke, Liam Caskie, Allan Cohrs, Sharon Cohrs, Patrick Hollingworth and Boyd Robinson on commercial expedition led by Sumit Joshi (Nepal).	High point of 6900 m reached on 3 May.	Ran out of time.
	Saribung (6328m) Damodar Himal, Nepal	Peter Allen (leader), Silvana Adams, Bryan Atkins, David Casson, Andrew Grandison, Wolfgang Haala, Alan Johnston, Trevor Klose, David Rae, Sheraz Raza, Alan Tomasic, Nevan Wadeson, David Witham and two sherpas.	Summit reached on 6 May by Allen, Atkins, Casson, Grandison, Haala, Raza, Tomasic, Wadeson, Witham and two sherpas.	First Australian ascent. Group exited through Mustang.
	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	David Chaplin, Darius Irani and Neill Johanson on commercial expedition led by David Hamilton (UK).	Johanson reached summit on 19 May.	
	Makalu (8463m), NW ridge, Nepal	Mick Parker, Paul Hudson and Roland Hunter (UK).	Parker and Hunter reached summit on 21 May.	Parker died in Kathmandu on 4 Jun, soon after his ascent. Parker's fourth 8000m mountain.
	Baruntse (7168m) E Nepal, SE Ridge	Colin Barton, Trevor Bennett, Geoff Robb, Annette Skirka, Ray Smith, Neil Thomas and Warren Townsden on commercial expedition led by Soren Ledet (Denmark).	High point of 6420m reached on 24 May by Barton, Bennett, Robb, Smith, Townsden and Ledet.	Abandoned due to storms and high winds.
	Nafee's Spire (6300m) West Wall, and Nayser Brakk (5200m) Charakusa Valley, Pakistan	Bruce Dowrick (NZ), Scott Standen, Jon Seddon (NZ), Adrian Laing.	New route, Naughty Daddies, climbed by Laing and Seddon, 19 pitches up to grade 25.	Nafee's Spire is a sub-peak of K7.
	Amotsang (6393m) and Pokarkhan (6345m), Damodar Himal Nepal	Damien Gildea and Chris Warner	Reached 5900m during attempt of new route on the north face of Pokarkhan. No feasible route found on west side of Amotsang.	Exploratory climbing in a newly opened area north of the Marsyandi Valley in Central Nepal.
	Manaslu (8163m), NE Face, Nepal	Lynette Trott on commercial expedition led by Robert Casserley (UK).	Trott reached camp 2 (6400m) on 19 Sep.	
	Tukuche (6920m), NW ridge, Central Nepal	Ian Rutherford on Finnish expedition.	Rutherford reached camp 1, 6025m on 21 Sep.	
	Manaslu (8163m), NE Face, Nepal	Brendan Savage and Margaret Watroba on commercial expedition led by Phil Crampton (UK).	Summit reached on 27 Sep using oxygen.	
	Shishapangma (8046m), North Face variant, Tibet	Andrew Lock, Neil Ward (UK).	Lock and Ward reached summit on 2 Oct.	First Australian ascent of Shishapangma. Lock first Australian to climb all 14 8000m mountains.
	Himlung (7128m), SW ridge, Nepal	Mick Chapman (UK), Katrina McDougall, Lhakpa Sherpa, Pasang Sherpa.	Lhakpa Sherpa reached summit on 22 Oct. Chapman reached 7000m.	
	Pumori (7161m) E Nepal, SW ridge	Amelia Powys on international commercial expedition led by Tim Rippel (Canada).	Powys reached camp 1, 6100m on 23 Oct.	Expedition abandoned due to unconsolidated snow.

YEAR	PEAK, ROUTE	PARTY MEMBERS	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
	Baruntse (716m) SE Ridge, Nepal	John Currie, Charles Doutney, David Doutney, Matthew Graham, Andrew Maher on commercial expedition led by Arnold Coster (Netherlands).	Doutney, Graham and Maher reach summit on 30 Oct.	
	Himlung (7128m), North spur of W ridge, Nepal	Ian Lord, Jock MacLachlan, Jim Morrow (NZ), Katie Sarah, Greg Turner, Damian Mannix, Simon Yates (UK) and Duncan Chessell (leader) of commercial expedition.	Chessell, Sarah, Morrow (NZ) and Mannix reached summit on 6 Nov 09. Yates and MacLachlan reached 6800 m on 7 Nov.	First Australian ascent of Himlung.
	Tukuche (6920m), NW ridge, Central Nepal	Daniel Newton, Barry Cohen (S Africa) and two sherpas.	Newton and Cohen reached camp 2 at 6350 m on 10 Nov. High point of 6700 m reached by sherpas.	Abandoned due to heavy snowfall and strong wind.
	Baruntse (7168m) SE Ridge, Nepal	Martyn Glynn on commercial expedition led by James Malone (USA).	Glynn's high point of 6250m reached on 25 Nov.	Expedition successful with 7 members on the summit.
2010	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	Janice Smith on commercial expedition led by Garrett Madison (USA).	Smith reached camp 3 in early May.	
	Putha Hiunchuli (7246m), N Face, W Nepal	Mick Chapman (UK), Peter Allen, Elizabeth Armitage, Wolfgang Haala, Kevin Harkins, Alan Johnson, Francis Laurence and four sherpas.	Chapman, Haala, Harkins, Laurence and four sherpas reached the summit on 10 May.	First Australian ascent.
	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	Mark Mangles and Robert Shepherd on commercial expedition led by Tim Rippel (Canada).		
	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	Lynette Trott on commercial expedition led by Kenton Cool (UK).	Trott reached camp 3 at 7300m on 15 May.	
	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	Patrick Hollingworth with four sherpas.	Reached summit on 17 May 10.	
	Mt Everest (8850m) N ridge, Tibet	Brendan O'Mahoney on commercial expedition led by Stuart Peacock (UK).	O'Mahoney reached summit on 23 May.	
	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	Margaret Watroba on Philip Crampton (UK) commercial expedition.	Watroba reached south summit (8750m) on 23 May.	
	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	Stephen Bock, Bradley Jackson, Darren Robertson and Peter Wells on commercial expedition led by Ronald Muhl (S Africa).	Wells, Bock and Robertson summit on 23 May, Jackson on 24 May.	
	Makalu (8463m), NW ridge, Nepal	Blair Falahey and Pemba Nuru Sherpa	Reached 8300m on 24 May.	Abandoned due to poor conditions.
	Mt Everest (8850m) N ridge, Tibet	Fikret Karacic, John Kazanas, Daniel Marino and Gavin Vickers on Dan Mazur (USA) commercial expedition.	Karacic and Vickers summit on 24 May, Kazanas 25 May.	
	Mt Everest (8850m) N ridge, Tibet	Rick Agnew, Robert Jackson, Baptista Kwok (Canada), Richard Moriarty (UK), John Nettleton (UK), Rob North, Katie Sarah, Chris Warner and Zac Zaharias on commercial expedition led by Duncan Chessell (leader).	Agnew, Chessell, North, Sarah, Warner and Zaharias reached summit on 25 May.	Most number of Australians on the summit of Everest from a single expedition. Chessell's third ascent of Everest, Zaharias's fifth 8000m mountain and oldest Australian to climb Everest (53).
	Manaslu (8163m), NE Face, Nepal	Matthew Gabriele on commercial expedition led by Russell Brice (NZ).	Reached summit on 1 Oct using oxygen from camp 3.	
	Pumori (7161m) E Nepal, SW ridge	Romano Mihailovic, Samuel Sealey and Roger Wright on international commercial expedition led by Tim Rippel (Canada).	Mihailovic, Sealey and Wright reached camp 1, 6100m on 21 Oct.	Expedition abandoned due to technical difficulty.

YEAR	PEAK, ROUTE	PARTY MEMBERS	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
	Chamlang (7321m) E headwall East Nepal	Theo Kossart and Stuart Morris.	High point of 6230m reached on 26 Oct.	Abandoned due to unconsolidated snow and strong wind.
	Baruntse (7168m) SE Ridge, Nepal	Tony Schuck, Jason Snell, Adrian Wilson on commercial expedition led by Dan Mazur.	Wilson reached summit on 3 Nov.	
	Yangma Peak (6550m) or Pabuk Kang S ridge from east, Nepal	Tim Macartney-Snape (leader), Ken Baldwin, David Barton, Adrian Cameron, John Finnigan, Theo Hooy, Stacey Rodger, Keith Scott.	Summit reached on 5 Nov by Macartney-Snape and Barton. Baldwin and Scott reached 6150m.	First ascent. Peak name is disputed.
2011	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	Paul Hameister on commercial expedition led by Mike Roberts (NZ).	Hameister reached summit on 11 May.	
	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	Allie Pepper with Dawa Sherpa.	Reached summit on 12 May.	
	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	Lynette Trott and Margaret Watroba on commercial expedition led by Phil Crampton (UK).	Watroba reached summit on 12 May.	
	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	Kevin Farebrother, Mark Mangles and Roger Wright on commercial expedition led by Tim Rippel (Canada).	Farebrother reached summit on 13 May.	
	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	Graham Austin on commercial expedition led by Greg Vernovage (USA).	Austin reached summit on 14 May.	
	Makalu (8463m), NW ridge, Nepal	James Neville on commercial expedition led by Robert Anderson (USA).	Reached summit on 17 May.	Oxygen used from camp 4
	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	Susan Hunt on commercial expedition led by Tim Mosedale (UK).	Hunt reached summit on 20 May.	
	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	Matthew Gabriele on Russell Brice (NZ) commercial expedition.	Gabriele reached summit on 20 May	
	Mt Everest (8850m) SE ridge, Nepal	Allan Cohrs, Christine Burke, Matt Carlin, Sharon Cohrs, Raul Helander (Sweden) and Soren Ledet (Denmark).	Allan and Sharon Cohrs and Burke reached summit on 20 May.	
	Kanchenjunga (8586m), SW Face Nepal	Blair Falahey and Chhang Sherpa.	Falahey reached summit on 20 May.	Falahey's fourth 8000m mountain. Oxygen used.
	Lhotse (8516m) W Face, Nepal	Gavin Vickers on commercial expedition led by Dan Mazur (USA).	Vickers reached summit on 21 May.	Fourth Australian ascent.
	Mt Everest (8850m) N ridge, Tibet	Andrew Lock climbing solo.	Lock reached 8000m on 27 May. Abandoned due to cold and wind.	No oxygen used. Smallest Australian Everest expedition.
	Spantik (7027m) SE Ridge, Pakistan	Zac Zaharias (leader), Taraidh Colquhoun, Kieran McCarthy, Tim Hawson, Rowan Paice, Mick Vander Vlist, Mick Cracknell, Stuart Young plus eight Pakistan climbers.	Successful. Summit reached on 3 Aug by Colquhoun, McCarthy, Paice, Vander Vlist, Young, Zaharias plus seven Pakistan climbers.	Joint Pakistan-Australian Military expedition.
	Spantik (7027m) SE Ridge, Pakistan	Jehangir Khan, Suleman Yaqub (Pakistan), Imran Khan (Pakistan) with high altitude porters Ali and Sher.	Jehangir Khan reached summit on 3 Aug.	
	Shipton Spire (5852m) East Face and Trango II (6327 m), Pakistan	Matt Scholes and Simon Young.	Ascent of 18 pitches of Ship of Fools (VI 5.11 A2 WI6 1300m) and 2000 metres within 24 hrs on Trango II.	Both climbs abandoned short of the summit due to poor weather.

Correction: *Wild* issue 134 incorrectly listed Andrew Lock's ascent of Annapurna in 2007 as via the French route, when in fact he followed the longer, more technical German Rib route. Please refer to wild.com.au or the previous issue for table footnotes.

A Beginner's Guide to Snowshoeing

Bruce Easton shares his tips about getting into the fast-growing yet little understood sport of snowshoeing

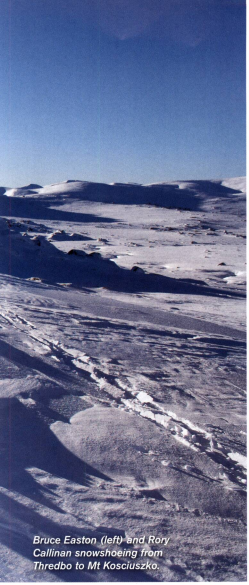
I picked up my first pair of Sherpa snowshoes in Kathmandu some 25 years back and have been introducing people to the simple joys of snowshoeing ever since. Nothing competes with venturing into the pristine snowfields, or breathing the crisp mountain air after snowcamping on an extended adventure. People who have skied in the past like the serenity and photographic opportunities that snowshoeing provides, while bushwalkers enjoy the thrill of experiencing their favourite trails in a whole new light.

The low elevations of the Australian snow country make it a dream destination for snowshoers, and the best part is it's as simple as walking. Forget about the expense of downhill or cross-country skiing; once you've got a pair of snowshoes, it's just one foot in front of the other. Since there's no minimum fitness requirement or skill level to get out and about, it's also a good snowsport to do with children.

I've snowshoed all over the world but believe the Main Range's western faces here in Australia offer you some truly unique vistas.

Background

People have used snowshoes to get around for thousands of years in regions like Scandinavia, the purpose of the trip often determining the design of the shoe. This remains the case today, with modern technical snowshoes varying widely in the style of the frame, deck, binding, rotation and traction systems.



Bruce Easton (left) and Rory Callinan snowshoeing from Thredbo to Mt Kosciuszko.

Snowshoes allow you to reach areas of the Snowy Mountains that are out of bounds even for cross-country skiers.

Most people prefer alloy frames than plastic ones, for example, because these are generally lighter and less clunky. Until the 1970's, snowshoes were primarily made from white ash and rawhide, fashioned into a bear paw shape for manoeuvring in forests or extremely long for traversing deep power. In the 80s, snowshoeing followed the Nordic skiing boom when the development of aluminium frames allowed beginners to enjoy snowshoeing from their first step.

Fitting

If you have tried walking on snow, you'll know how exhausting it can be. Snowshoes increase the surface area of your boots so that you can float on top, while many incorporate crampons to give you grip in icy sections. In favourable weather conditions, with the right snowshoes, walking in the snow can be as easy if not easier than bushwalking. A 9 x 25 inch snowshoe is the most appropriate size of snowshoe for Australia and New Zealand's relatively low level of powder snow, but of course, your weight, intended use, and the type of snow on the day also affect the shoe style and size you need. Sussing out the right bindings for you is the most important aspect of the fitting, and you may find you need to try a few different types to find the one that best suits your gait and stride.

One of my favourite types is a Crescent Moon shoe because the single pull loop binding moulds securely round your foot, the frame is lightweight but durable, and it features a three-claw crampon for easy gripping. This brand of shoe is also manufactured using recyclable materials and wind energy. Naturally, since women and children have smaller feet than men, they need lighter and narrower shoes, while those using snowshoeing for fitness training will want to look at slim racing snowshoes that fit closely around your running shoes.

An entry-level pair of snowshoes will set you back around $200, while a half day tour with Wilderness Sports including hire and afternoon tea starts at $89.

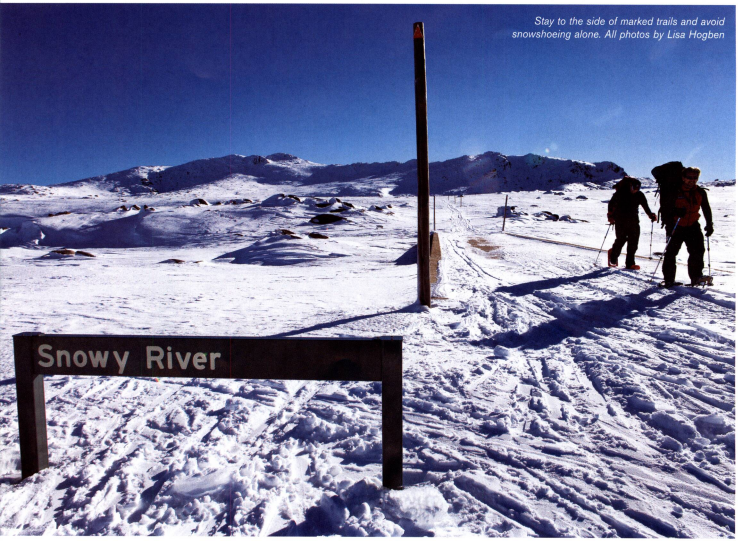
Technique

Start out simple by learning key skills such as how to get up quickly from a fall, how to balance while turning, and get to know the most comfortable stride length. As you practice, you can work on breaking trail (making a new track in the snow), as well as ascending, traversing and descending a slope.

A lot of people struggle with the fact that the bindings don't allow you to walk backwards, or mistakenly assume they need to take unnaturally huge steps to account for the snowshoes.

Clothing

Since snowshoes fit over the top of your own shoes, solid hiking boots are essential. Dressing according to a layering system will ensure you stay warm, dry and focused on the task at hand, while accessories such as trekking poles, gaiters and a snowshoe tote bag come later. It goes without saying that, as on a summertime bushwalk, you'll want to carry a daypack including a repair kit and snacks, plus a first aid kit and rescue beacon if you're venturing away from resort areas. As the UV level is high on the mountains, it's important to wear sunscreen and sunglasses or goggles. And remember, weather in the Alps can change quickly at any time of the year so you need to be prepared for all conditions, even on day trips.



Stay to the side of marked trails and avoid snowshoeing alone. All photos by Lisa Hogben

Winter skills

The motto 'safety first' is pertinent when learning to snowshoe. You need to know how to prevent and treat hypothermia, for example, and use this knowledge when evaluating the risks before crossing deep snowdrifts, cornices or frozen bodies of water. And as you'll be navigating backcountry, you'll want to swat up on your map and compass-reading skills. Once you've got the snowshoe bug, you may want to take your winter survival training further, learning how to build a shelter and signal for help if lost for instance. In the meantime, carrying extra clothes, matches and a nightlight is just common sense. A lot of people who ski overseas prefer to use their time in the Australian Alps for snowshoeing and even experienced polar explorers or mountaineers have told me they wish they'd discovered snowshoes earlier in life. I've also noticed an increasing number of expert snowboarders using snowshoes to hike to the best powder because of how easy they are to use and carry.

Resources

Speaking with local snowshoers who understand the conditions of the area is the best way to learn, but there are some valuable texts on the sport including Gene Prater's *Snowshoeing: From Novice to Master* and the eighth chapter of Matt McClelland's *Best River & Alpine Walks around Mt Kosciuszko*. You can also download some helpful information from McClelland's website wildwalks.com or his newly developed iTunes app.

Where

I'd always advise you to call ahead to resorts to check the access to trails and availability of rental gear. Lake Mountain, Falls Creek and Mount Hotham in Victoria all offer snowshoeing tours, though these aren't particularly regular. I run demonstrations and tours from my store in Perisher, NSW, which boasts the only dedicated snowshoe trail in the country. The Rock Creek Snowshoe Track suits beginners because it's a gentle three-kilometre track through a naturally treeless frost hollow and into snowgum woodland. You have to look out for oversnow vehicles as you cross Kosciuszko Road, then follow the access track to Mt Perisher double chair, where you can grab a hot drink. Then you simply circle back down the sheltered Perisher Valley and around the resort's lodges. I also like taking first-timers out to Mt Wheatley or Porcupine Rocks because many of them bushwalk this way in summer. Taking the chairlift to the top of Thredbo is another popular option on a good day. Limited tours are also available in Charlotte Pass and Mount Selwyn.

3 SNOWSHOEING TIPS

- You can snowshoe throughout the winter but the start of the ski season is a particularly good time, when you'd be at risk of damaging your skis on the thin snow cover and the slopes are quiet.
- For the safety of skiers, avoid snowshoeing on cross-country skiing trails where you will leave indentations. Best practice is to simply stay just to the side of marked trails.
- Ideally, travel with at least two other people and always let someone know when you're due to return.

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Turkish *Delights*

The Taurus mountains of Turkey provide plenty of inspiration for bush cook *Andrew Davison*

The crackling of the afternoon call to prayer echoed below as I proceeded along cobbled paths into the mountains.

The trail led me deeper into the interior of Turkey, passing quaint stone farmhouses with their vine-clad trellises bowing under a profuse cache of grapes. I continued through fields of brilliant green sesame and wheat before re-entering an oak forest and weaving between spectacular rock formations. Emerging on a limestone slope overlooking the village of Çaltepe, I surveyed the patchwork of green fields and a path worn smooth by goats' hooves.

Down among the narrow hay-strewn streets of Çaltepe, old men sat by the çayhane (teahouse) while the women huddled round the village spring to get water for the evening meal.

I soon became lost beneath the village's tangle of shingle roofs. Women peered from windows and children scampered around me, screaming phrases I was yet to understand.

Then, from behind a brushwood fence a proud-looking man in a tattered wooly jumper and high rubber boots called me over. A small lady rushed out carrying two delicate hour-shaped glasses filled with bitterly strong, black tea and we sat on a log playing charades to establish my comings and doings. As the temperature began to fall, the air become moist and shadows grow long, this generous couple - Halimer and Isa - invited me to stay for dinner.

Entering their little house, I noted that the kitchen was perfectly equipped for the celebrated cuisine of Turkey. Shelves were lined with imperishable homemade ingredients such as molasses, tahini and honey. Stacked in the corner were sacks of dried bulgur and sesame, while fresh oregano hung from the rafters and mint grew on the windowsill. I watched with fascination as Isa prepared a rich spread of wild mushrooms with tomatoes, fried peppers in a yoghurt sauce, and bulgur köfte from the one small stove and without a refrigerated product in sight. Inspired for a new series of bushwalking meals, I spent the rest of the evening coaxing centuries-old recipes from my genial host and here lay out two of these (with some adaptation) for you to try.

Spiced lentil spread.
All photos by Andrew Davison

SPICED LENTIL SPREAD

Serves 2

½ cup of bulgur
½ cup of red lentils (masoor dahl)
3 dessert spoons of oil
1 small onion (or 4 spoons of dried onion flakes)
2 garlic cloves (finely chopped)
1 dessert spoon of tomato paste (or equivalent in tomatoes granules)
1½ teaspoons of cumin powder
1 teaspoon of paprika
1 dessert spoon of lemon juice
4–6 pieces of unleavened bread
Feta cheese (optional)
Spring onion (optional)

AT HOME

Pack the lentils and bulgur separately. Pack tomato paste, garlic, cumin powder, paprika and lemon juice together in a watertight container.

IN THE FIELD

Bring two cups of water to the boil; add lentils and cook for 7–10 minutes. Stir in the bulgur. Remove from heat, cover and set aside until all liquid is absorbed and bulgur is soft. Place the tomato mix into a pan and fry for a minute or until fragrant, then add to the softened lentil mix. Spread onto unleavened bread and top with chopped spring onions and crumbled feta.

TIP: I carry a small bottle of lemon squeeze to add a zest to soups, salads and dishes like the above; the excess can be mixed with sugar for a refreshing lemonade. Fresh mint, meanwhile, can be carried for days before spoiling.

Bulgur köfte in tomato sauce.

BULGUR KÖFTE IN TOMATO SAUCE

Serves 2
¾ cup of bulgur
¼ cup plain flour
1 teaspoon of cumin powder
½ teaspoon each of salt and pepper
1 small onion (or 2 spoons of dried onion flakes)
2 garlic cloves (finely chopped)
½ teaspoon of coriander powder
½ teaspoon of paprika
1 teaspoon of dried mint leaves
2 large spoons of tomato paste (or the equivalent in tomato granules)
½ teaspoon of vegetable stock powder
3 dessert spoons of lemon juice
3 dessert spoons of oil

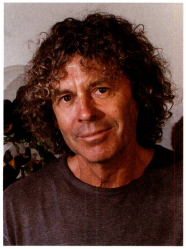
AT HOME

Pack the flour, cumin powder, salt and pepper together in a plastic bag. Pack the bulgur separately. Pack the tomato paste, spices and herbs, oil, lemon, stock powder and chopped garlic together in a water tight container.

IN THE FIELD

Put the bulgur into a pot with a cup of water and bring to the boil. Once boiled, set aside to allow the bulgur to absorb the water and soften. Add the flour to the cooled bulgur and kneed for five minutes or until well combined, then roll into 12–15 small dumplings. Meanwhile, place the tomato paste mix in the largest pot you have and fry for one minute. Add two cups of water and bring to boil. Add the dumplings and simmer for 7–10 minutes. Gently stir, adding more water if necessary. Once the sauce has thickened and the köfte are cooked through, remove from heat and serve with unleavened bread.

TIP: If you can find a small foil packet of tomato paste, this dish will last weeks in your pack. If you have paste left over, make tomato soup the next day (as per my recipe in *Wild* issue 125).



MARSUPIAL DESIGN OUTSIDE THE BOX

Steve Van Dyck finds mammalian mates won't be separated

My derriere missed out on the disposable nappy era by an epoch or two but my nose was right up front when dawn broke on the age of tissues. I was four when my father started work as a travelling salesman for Kleenex, so when he left the job eight years later, blowing my nose into a cotton hankie was as foreign to me then as navigating a bidet today.

During those intervening years, my family lived and breathed paper tissues. My mother dipped them in Ajax to scrub my face. They were twisted and packed up my nose when it bled. My school lunches were wrapped in the stuff. On birthday mornings I had to find my hidden presents by following 18 kilometres of toilet tissue cunningly trailed in a maze through every room and fixture in the house. And most years, Cracker Night ended earlier than planned when a stray ember from a sparkler found its way into my exploding shoebox of tissue-packed fireworks.

This early familiarity with disposable paper products that were so recklessly used then thrown away had a subtle way of outcasting me from the pack, and aggravated my contempt when I later realised what was being cut down and bleached to produce such lavish volumes. So I should have been more suspicious when on the eve of on a mammal-collecting trip to Birdsville in 1975 a mate suggested we could travel much lighter if we took fold-up disposable cardboard cages in which we could safely bring animals back to Brisbane.

Unassembled, they were flat, largish sheets of brown corrugated cardboard with wire flyscreen windows along each

Photo: John Sheridan

side - just the thing for a VW Beetle already overloaded with all the things needed for a spur-of-the-moment 3000-kilometre round trip to the Simpson Desert. The creature for which the boxes were intended was a small, rare desert marsupial known by the magical Aboriginal name …kowari (*Dasyuroides byrnei*).

No bigger than a rat, the kowari is living proof that from the deadest-looking stony deserts come Australia's most superbly beautiful marsupials. The living tragedy of it all is that so few of us even know this animal exists.

The kowari's silky, beige fur is kept in the pink of condition by the constant powdering it gets from the fine, compacted dust it burrows and bathes in (just below the surface of sand-blasted glassy, brown pebbles). Its thick tail, which is fawn near the rump, ends in a long, black bush that makes the whole appendage look a bit like one of those stiff cleaning mops we were supposed to dry out our wooden school recorders with, but didn't, so they cracked.

By night when the desert is cool, the kowari leaves its burrow, stretches and yawns at the entrance, then charges off in a whirlwind of intention to rid the gibber plains of grasshoppers, centipedes, mice and birds. It thinks nothing of slipping down a hole and filling up on an unattended litter of baby mice or rats. And because it needs no free water to drink, such a juicy meal supplies it with all the moisture required to wash the feast down and process the bits.

It can leap up and catch startled birds with the ease of a cat and, using its tail as a rudder, about-face on a sixpence. Its inner ears are specially developed to detect the low frequency sounds made by barn owl wings, a ghostly pair of which descending on the kowari could well knock on the head any plans to get back to the burrow before morning.

Like most small desert mammals, kowari numbers fluctuate wildly with rainfall and also in relation to the impact of cats that eat them, and cattle that compact the soil where they burrow. Sometimes kowaris can disappear for 20 years from a place where they were once relatively common, then suddenly reappear. No one fully understands this phenomenon.

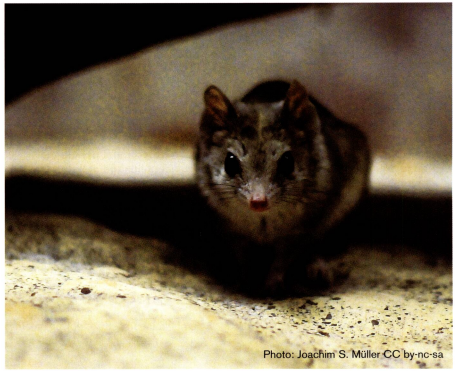


Photo: Joachim S. Müller CC by-nc-sa

That winter, when the VW plunged its way through the pits of bull dust west of Windorah, the desert was on the tail end of a rat plague. Native long-haired rats (*Rattus villosissimus*) were everywhere, and a casual sweep of a torch beam would light up a hundred ruby-red eyes peering from their squats. The rats' screeching and fighting could be heard at any time through the night. And the silent, spectral flight of barn owls across the plains bore testimony to the hairy feast that was on tap.

These conditions of unlimited tucker (ie. baby rats) must have favoured the kowaris as well, because on the first night of our arrival at Sandringham Station (about 200 kilometres north of Birdsville), after setting our small wire traps on the bare gibber plains and chasing hopping-mice for most of the night, by 1am we were astounded to find six kowaris, some with pink, jelly-bean babies in their pouch, sitting patiently inside their traps.

When we took them back to the station barracks where we were camped, we unfolded three of the cardboard storage cages and installed two of the precious (but feisty) marsupials in each cage. We stacked the boxes in a corner and passed out on swags in the next room, totally knackered from the long day of doing battle with a VW now devoid of shock-absorbers and a hard night sprinting across the plains to catch mice in a butterfly net.

However, at about 3.30am, I was woken by something scampering across my sleeping bag and there, in the torchlight, was one of the bottle-brushed gibber goblins, tail held high, running and skidding around the room. In a semi-conscious state I stumbled into the adjoining room to see what was going on with the other captives.

Each of those damnable disposable cages had a great gaping hole chewed in its wire window and every kowari had escaped. The cages were empty.

I staggered back to my swag and collapsed, too depressed and exhausted to do anything other than curse the cages and resign myself to having lost all the kowaris; I spent what was left of the night dreaming of how I'd beat the boxes to pulp and burn them in the morning.

But when the grey dawn broke I was not to get my way because, unbelievable as it sounds, each of those kowaris had returned to a cardboard box of its own selection and was curled up asleep in the straw — they had merely changed bed partners to suit their own tastes.

Thank goodness for the magical animal attraction of cardboard cages! Without them I would have been reaching for the tissues.

Dr Steve Van Dyck is the senior curator of vertebrates at the Queensland Museum.

Namadgi National Park

***John Evans,* author of Johnny Boy's Walkabout Blog, describes three varied day walks in the south of the ACT.**

More than half of the Australian Capital Territory is conserved as national park and open space reserves. Situated in the granite high country of the Great Dividing Range, Namadgi National Park offers unparalleled walking all year round. There are many well-maintained and signposted walking tracks but, for walkers with more skill and determination, there are also remote and trackless wilderness areas. Namadgi National Park is the northernmost park in that magnificent linkage of natural areas, the Australian Alps National Parks, which sweeps across the roof of our country and is home to arguably the greatest of the great walks, the Australian Alps Walking Track.

I have selected three walks that offer a variety of experiences to showcase the flora, fauna and topography of Namadgi National Park, from track heads that are readily reached from Canberra by a 2WD vehicle.

ACCESS

The gateway to the national park is the Namadgi Visitors Centre, 30 minutes' drive from the centre of Canberra, south through the rural village of Tharwa on the Naas Road. Call in to the Visitors Centre to obtain the latest walking information and have a chat with the friendly staff.

WHEN TO GO

The ACT definitely exhibits the four seasons of the year. Summers are hot, with daytime temperatures reaching the high 30s, while winter overnight temperatures fall below zero and bring frost, with snow on the high ranges. Spring and autumn provide the best walking but, as the climate is not humid, any time is a great time to walk in Namadgi National Park.

CAMPING AND ACCOMMODATION

Canberra offers a full range of accommodation options (and fine dining to soothe any walking discomfort). Within Namadgi National Park there are three camping grounds (bookings required through the Namadgi Visitors Centre). Remote area backpack camping requires a permit in the upper Cotter Catchment but is freely available in most other areas.

SAFETY/WARNINGS

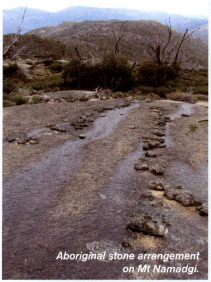
Sign on at bushwalking registers, and don't forget to record your return. Take warm, waterproof clothing, as mountain weather can change at any time of the year – Bimberi Peak, on the western border of the park, is only 300 metres lower than the summit of Mt Kosciuszko. You may encounter feral animals, including wild dogs and pigs in the more remote areas, so don't solo walk there. When off-track, carry a map and compass, possibly a GPS, and consider taking a Personal Locator Beacon, as mobile phone reception may not be available.

TRACKS

The Namadgi Map and Guide shows 169 kilometres of walking tracks and details the routes for 22 day walks. You can collect information brochures for many of these walks from the Namadgi Visitors Centre or download them from their website.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Namadgi Visitors Centre 02 6207 2900 or www.tams.act.gov.au/parks-recreation/parks_and_reserves/namadgi_national_park
Canberra Bushwalking Club www.canberrabushwalkingclub.org
Namadgi – A National Park for the National Capital published by National Parks Association of the ACT www.npaact.org.au



Aboriginal stone arrangement on Mt Namadgi.

A tenacious snow gum on Mt Gingera.

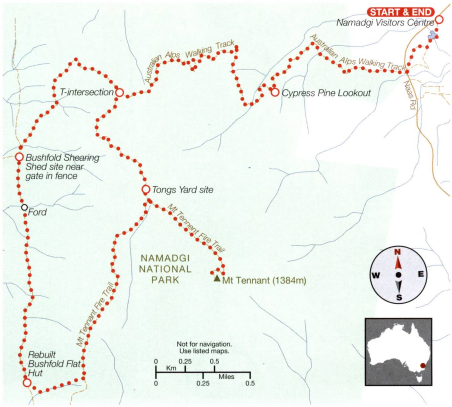
The Walk

MT TENNENT AND BUSHFOLD FLAT

DISTANCE: 14km or 20km
TIME: 5 hours or 7 hours
START/FINISH: Namadgi Visitors Centre (park outside the gate if returning after 4.00 pm).

Mt Tennent (named after bushranger John Tennant, who is reputed to have buried his spoils in a cave on the hill) towers over the Namadgi Visitors Centre. A large land slip scars its side. It's a steep climb, the well-constructed Australian Alps Walking Track rising 500 vertical metres over 4.5 kilometres to the northern ridge, then further track and fire trail ascending 300 more vertical metres over 2.5 kilometres to the fire tower. There are magnificent views from the top. Some walkers load up their overnight packs with bricks and water and train for extended walking trips; staff from the nearby Outward Bound base often run to the top.

This steep but manageable walk starts at the back door of the Visitors Centre. A bridge crosses the pond that has refilled after two good seasons of rain. The track wends through woodland then crosses the Naas Road, where the bushwalking register should be signed. Within a short distance the power lines and road noise are left behind and the route climbs to Cypress Pine Lookout. A bench and stone table provide a spot to rest. The climb continues across drainage lines spanned by bridges. The track contours to a spur line, providing a short respite, then the climb begins in earnest up a stone staircase fringed by Hardenbergia. The northern ridge is reached 4.5 kilometres from the start. The T-intersection is well signposted – take the south (left) track, leaving the AAWT. An old vehicle track provides a 1.2-kilometre link to the Mt Tennent fire trail, joining it near an open area that was once the location of Tong's sheep yards. The summit of Mt Tennent is reached a further one kilometre up the fire trail. The views are amazing – from Canberra in the northeast, to grazing leases on the Gudgenby River in the south and around to Booroomba Rocks (a favourite rock climbing site) in the west. There are also distant views to the Brindabella Range and the ACT border. Return the same way, or lengthen the walk to take in Bushfold Flat. Coming down from the summit, remain on the Mt Tennant fire trail as it turns south. The Flat can be seen to the west and any route down through the timber will arrive there. However, it is easier walking to stay on the fire trail until reaching a junction (four kilometres from the fire tower on top of Mt Tennent). Turn north here, out onto Bushfold Flat. Walk 2.6 kilometres north along the Flat, passing the rebuilt Bushfold Hut, through a gate in an old fence line and, about 200 metres further on, following the AAWT signage, veering to the northeast and up the flank of the Tennent ridge to come in at the T-intersection on the inward leg. The remainder of the walk trip back to the Visitors Centre allows more opportunity for taking in the views, but take extra care on the downhill slope.



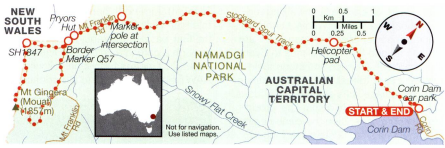
Time to climb the Mt Tennant rock staircase.

Snow gum on Brumbys Flats.

MT GINGERA FROM CORIN DAM

DISTANCE: 20km
TIME: 1 day
START/FINISH: Corin Dam, at the end of Corin Road.

This walk typifies the excellent access and fine destinations available to bushwalkers in the ACT. In half a day it is possible to leave the national capital, driving on a sealed road, and walk an easily navigated track to arrive at a sub-alpine top just less than 400 metres lower than Mt Kosciuszko. At this elevation there is snow in winter and a cool alpine temperature in summer – perfect! A faintly distinguishable footpad used to climb the side spur from Corin Dam to Stockyard Spur but, on the recommendations of the 2003 firestorm enquiry, a dam catchment fire break and firefighters escape route has recently been established by clearing vegetation and building hundreds of timber and stone steps. The four broad steps at the start represent the four rises to the Spur, because it's a 500 vertical metre climb over two kilometres to reach the helipad – and that's steep. Vehicle track and then a final walking track (another eight kilometres and 500 vertical metres) lead to Mt Gingera, a beautiful snow gum covered hill with extensive views. Situated on this last leg is a delightful building which is a great spot for morning tea. Mt Gingera used to be named Mouat, after Harry Mouat, the surveyor who mapped out this wild western border of the ACT between 1913 and 1915. Return the way you came (or via the ridge to the northwest to Spot Height 1847 and down to Pryors Hut), grateful that it's (almost) all downhill.



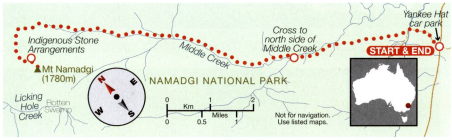
Mt Gingera

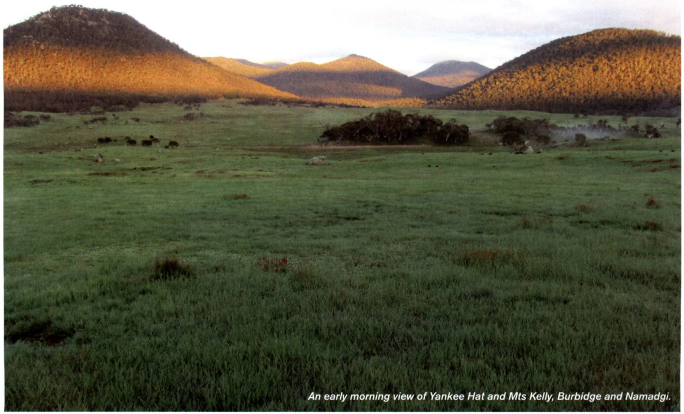
MT NAMADGI FROM YANKEE HAT

DISTANCE: 30km
TIME: 1 day
START/FINISH: Yankee Hat carpark.

Mt Namadgi is one of the high hills at the heart of Namadgi National Park. Along with Mts Kelly and Burbidge, it provides a very challenging trip into the Bimberi Wilderness area of the Park, which is deliberately kept free of tracks and signage. Walkers need to be well equipped and experienced navigators to attempt it. It's a 13.5-hour, 30-kilometre day walk from the Yankee Hat car park or a bit more relaxed as an overnight trip. However, the rewards are more than worth the blood, sweat and tears (that's clothing tears!) – large aboriginal stone arrangements, uninterrupted 360° views from the sub-alpine top and a huge sense of satisfaction. Indelible memories buoy flagging bodies on the return journey.

Johnny Boy's Walkabout Blog
These walks, and nearly 700 others in the ACT and nearby NSW, are described in Johnny Boy's Walkabout Blog at www.johnevans.id.au. The detailed track notes are accompanied by photos and other multimedia presentations, including tracks and waypoints on map segments and Google Earth data.





An early morning view of Yankee Hat and Mts Kelly, Burbidge and Namadgi.

Tents

The *Wild* team survey three and four-season tents for at least two people

The camping community is set for a raft of innovations in 2013 if last year's product launches are anything to go by, from Sierra Designs' cuben fiber, $1700 Mojo UFO tent to the zip-less Big Agnes Fishhook SL 2 tent, but as we antipodeans move into winter we find ourselves looking back at old favourites as well as innovators for shelter. Of course, a multitude of factors influence which tent is best for you (eg. climate, desired weight, how cosy you are with your companion, how much time you plan to spend inside, the ground composition where you're headed). For this survey we considered the main strengths and weaknesses of a range of tent models available to buy in Australia and marketed as suitable for two people or more, testing each overnight at low altitude in the Victorian bush at the end of the summer.

From specifications alone, the Tatonka Narvik 2 stands out as having the most water repellant fly and floor, while the Rab Latok Base Bivi MK comes with the niftiest poles and Terra Nova's Luxe Lightwave the lightest when packed. Tents that impressed us during testing included the roomy Mont Epoch, the quick-to-pitch and dismantle MSR Fury and the stable WE Dart 2, as well as those indicated the best for certain uses. Our criteria was as follows:

Strength & ventilation

We assessed the thickness and tension of the floor, fly and inner fabric, including the height of the floor-wall seam. We also considered the durability of fasteners and pegs, as well as how walls held up in wind and rain. The tents tested were fairly evenly split between flysheets of treated nylon and those of polyester, while aluminum-based poles were featured across the board. We also made note of the condensation levels and warmth of each tent with two people inside, including any dual layer vents or draughts.

Ease of use & weight

Perhaps the most important aspect of any tent is the speed with which you can erect it when the elements are conspiring against you, and as such we noted the length of time needed to pitch each tent (based on intuition rather than practice) and how user-friendly the various fastenings were. We also compared the manufacturer-stated weight of each tent and the volume it reduced.

Space & comfort

Testers recorded how easy it was to enter and exit the tent in daylight, how comfortably two people could fit sitting and lying down, plus how fabric felt to the touch. We also checked how easy it was to store gear and whether the footprint of each tent was in line with its interior space.

Other features

Features such as dual layer doors or extra storage pockets were noted, as were ideas for improving the overnight experience such as extra flooring or using guylines. Our aim is to offer a cross-section of the two-person tent market to help you decide the features that are most important to you.

BLACKWOLF GRASSHOPPER 2

A handy little dome tent, the Grasshopper has three poles in a nifty colour-coded configuration so there's heaps of head space with enough room for two adults. Even though the fly doesn't come all the way to the ground, the deep gutter of the inner is okay. The inner is made of mesh so make sure you snug up in cool weather, and maybe use a footprint as the floor is made of lightweight material that doesn't feel very thick. It has two entrances and two big vestibules and folds down very small.

BLACKWOLF MANTIS 2

The Mantis is 1.4 metres across at widest point, tapers a little at the head (which is the highest point) and tapers dramatically to feet. It has colour-coded poles, like the Grasshopper, but is a bit like a tunnel tent, with side vestibules big enough for a moderately sized pack on each side. There are lots of pegs, which are probably the heaviest component of the unit. This is a good tent for shorter walks without huge packs.

EXPED VENUS II

With loads of floor space, the Venus II is erected as an all-in-one unit. The bag says it only takes 2.5 minutes to pop up but that's with practice - it took us substantially longer. The poles are in the fly while the inner hangs off, and inside a removable storage sling is up top. The doors are double layer so in warm weather, just zip the thicker material off to leave the mesh. Exped's attention to detail is incredible, and the longer you stay in it the more bits and pieces you notice, such as plastic hooks rather than toggles to hold doors back.

EXPED GEMINI II

The first time getting this up took a bit of figuring out, but it was worth it. There's lots of head room and while the sides of the inner are mesh, the roof is solid. When you peg out the corners for maximum floor space the inner stretches beautifully, with no saggy spots. The fly is freestanding and the doors are big teardrops that enter the huge vestibules.

HILLEBERG ALLAK

BEST FOR SNOWY CONDITIONS

The Allak is fully freestanding with vestibules integrated into the structure. The first thing you notice is it just slides out of the stuff sack – no snow will stay on the fly for long. This tent is made for the snow: it's all thick, rubber zip flaps and heavily reinforced pole inserts. There are two doors, with the lower zip running almost the entire length of the inner. The pegs included are small stakes easy to drive into hard ground, and although the tent comes in a big stuff sack, it can be squashed down smaller. A serious tent for serious mountaineers.

TERRA NOVA LUXE LIGHTWAVE

Weighing only 1.35 kilograms, this tent has a long, thin inner and practically no vestibule. The full mesh inner hangs off the fly, but fly ventilation is not reinforced and must be pegged out with a guy rope. The material doesn't feel as sturdy as others surveyed so it's best to use a footprint. While it holds two people at a squeeze, it's comfortable with one and their pack. We recommend using sturdier pegs for tough terrain as the included ones aren't the best.

MARMOT LIMELIGHT 3P

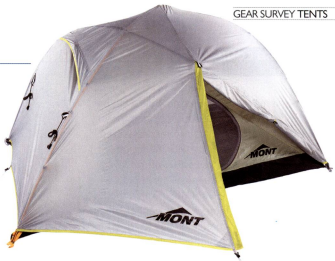
Technically a three-person tent, it's a bit tight for three adults at only 1.68 metres wide but comfortable for two. It's tall – 1.17 metres high – but the beam across the top extends just far out enough to give enough headroom for two. It's a simple dome set-up, with two vestibules, each big enough to hold a large pack. The tent comes with a footprint and upstairs storage sling included. At 3 kilograms, it's not the lightest one in this survey, but if you can squeeze three people in it's a weight-efficient tent for an overnighter.

MONT EPOCH

The Epoch has a straightforward set-up and packs down to a surprisingly small volume. It has a massive front entrance/vestibule as well as a rear entrance (but no vestibule there), and the inside is roomy with double-layer doors. At the top of the fly are ventilation zips but it still got quite warm with the more solid material on the doors zipped on. The inner has lots of little storage pockets and the included pegs are for hard ground, which is handy.

BEST FOR LONG DISTANCE MULTIDAY WALKS

MONT FIREFLY



Mont's Firefly is a similar-style dome to the BlackWolf Grasshopper, but this one stretches the mesh of the inner tent tauter. It's also thicker and thus warmer, with double-layer teardrop doors on each side. The two vestibules are big enough for a large pack each. Ventilation is controlled using zips at the top, and there are a lot of pockets scattered throughout the inner. Consider using a footprint as the floor feels fairly thin, but all in all, this is a great option for lightweight walking.

BEST THREE SEASON TENT

ONE PLANET GOONDIE 2-15D

Designed for tent pads, the Goondie has a freestanding inner that doesn't require pegs to stay up (but comes with pegs, including two heavy duty 'mega pegs'). The tent did perfectly well on flat ground though, and the floor material felt thick and durable, more so than many tents surveyed. As the Goondie 15D has a full-mesh (15-denier) inner, it may be a bit chilly in winter, so consider the Goondie 30D model if you think you'll need a bit more insulation as it has more solid inner material.

RAB LATOK BASE

Being in this tent (which one could argue is technically an ultra-bivy) you feel like you're inside a giant rain jacket, which isn't far off the truth as it's a single skin of 3-layer eVent. Threading the poles through is a bit tricky - you have to do it from the inside but it's easier to erect if someone holds up the top belay point for you from outside. While the specs say the tent is designed for three to four people, it sleeps two very comfortably. The design of the poles is genius – the floor/wall angle is very large so the tent is particularly roomy for its size, plus it has belay donuts and a deep doorstep to stop sneaky snowdrifts.

TATONKA NARVIK 2

One of the few tunnel tents reviewed, the all-in-one Narvik 2 is quite tapered but surprisingly roomy and certainly big enough for two people. The poles quickly and easily lock into heavy-duty slots and the inner hangs off the fly to keep the inside nice and dry. Like most tunnel tents, there's one entrance with a zipped ventilation flap at the top. You can fit two medium-sized packs in the vestibule at the entrance, but getting in and out means that one of the two will be exposed to the elements whenever you need to get in or out. The inner was a bit baggy in parts but the adjustable drawstring running along the top allows you to tighten it up a bit.

WILDERNESS EQUIPMENT ARROW

This all-in-one tunnel tent packs down tiny yet has plenty of room for two people to sleep comfortably side by side. The vestibule fits two medium-sized packs and you feel safe inside with the tough floor and double-layer doors (with a zip-off layer). While the pegs included are small, they hold well in windy weather, and the ventilation within the tent was so good that, there was no condensation on the inside of the fly come morning. It's great for tall people too – with the highest point near the door being more than a metre high, and the length of the inner two metres long.

WILDERNESS EQUIPMENT DART 2 WINTER

Compact for easy carrying and very stable when set up, this is a classic backpacking tent with space for two tall adults. There's not loads of headroom but the double-layer doors and twin vestibules make for a comfortable sleep. We had to keep the snazzy siliconised fly fully shut to keep rain out of the inner but appreciated the two symmetrical doors and neutral colour. Cross ventilation is good of course, with doors easily tucked into inner panels, though there are lighter options on the market (including the Second Arrow) if weight is your main concern.

MSR FURY

This has to be one of the easiest four-season tents to set up in history, with pole clips rather than sleeves and adjustable cinctures featuring seatbelt-style clips to attach the fly at the base. The door is somewhat small but the space inside is impressive for the tent's footprint (two can happily sit facing each other and the peak is just over a metre high). The bathtub floor is sturdy, with a higher hydrostatic head count than many surveyed, but the walls do bow in heavy wind. There are plenty of pockets including a gear loft, and a large rear vent helps with better-than-expected ventilation. The hooped vestibule is big enough for two medium-sized packs and boots, and the price reasonable.

VANGO HALO 200

As the heaviest and cheapest in the bunch, this geodesic tent had a lot to prove. The all-in-one style saved us from despairing about a strong breeze, though it was a bit tricky to fit the poles into the grommets the first time without faffing with the fly tension bands. Dual entry means you can choose a vestibule downwind, while the fly sheds water quickly and a generous gap between fly and inner keeps condensation to a minimum. A decent amount of traditional pegs come included and the floor comes up high but one might expect to gain more height and floor space for the weight you're carrying.

	FLY FABRIC	FLY HYDRO HEAD (MM)	FLOOR HYDRO HEAD (MM	PACKED WEIGHT (KG)	FLOOR AREA (M^2)	KEY FEATURES	APPROX PRICE
BlackWolf Grasshopper 2 blackwolf.com.au	Polyester polyurethane-coated (PU)	3000	5000	2.6	2.8	Mesh inner, 2 doors/vestibules, attic pockets	$320
BlackWolf Mantis 2 blackwolf.com.au	Polyester (PU)	3000	5000	2.3	2.2	2 doors, 2 vestibules	$308
Exped Gemini II expeditionequipment.com.au	Ripstop nylon silicone-coated one side, PU the other (Sil/PU)	N/A	5000	2.5	2.8	Steep walls, wide and high doors	$550
Exped Venus II expeditionequipment.com.au	Ripstop polyester (PU)	N/A	10000	3.2	2.8	Quick setup/ pulldown	$680
Hilleberg Allak hilleberg.com	Nylon (Sil both sides)	3000	5000	3.3	2.8	Freestanding (vestibules integrated), four-season	$835
Marmot Limelight 3P marmotaustralia.com.au	Ripstop polyester	1800	3000	3	4	DAC Pressfit poles, 2 doors/vestibules, jingle and snag-free zips	$600
Mont Epoch mont.com.au	Nylon PU	2000	10000	3.5	3.5	DAC poles	$800
Mont Firefly mont.com.au	Nylon PU	2000	10000	2.7	2.9	DAC (aluminium alloy) poles	$550
MSR Fury 2 spelean.com.au	Ripstop nylon (Sil/PU)	1500	10000	3.2	3.3	Reinforced guy-out points, taped bathtub floor, small footprint	$890
One Planet Goondie 2 15D oneplanet.com.au	Nylon (Sil/PU)	1500	5000	1.9	2.6	DAC Featherlite poles, mesh inner	$580
Rab Latok Base Bivi MK 4 rab.uk.com	Single skin eVent	30000	70000	3.3	4.2	7 DAC poles cross over geodesic design, tunnel and door vent, doorstep to prevent spindrift	$1195
Tatonka Narvik 2 osabrands.com	Polyester PU	8000	10000	2.7	5.6	All-in-one, large air vents, aluminium poles	$400
Terra Nova Luxe Lightwave backpackinglight.com.au	Ripstop nylon (Sil/PU)	2000	4000	1.4	2.3	Multi-pitch tunnel design	$300
Vango Halo 200 ansco.com.au	Polyester	5000	6000	3.6	3.2	All-in-one, Powerlite alloy poles, 2 doors	$300
Wilderness Equipment Dart 2 Winter wildequipment.com.au	Seamsealed polyester	2000	8000	2.9	3.2	Freestanding, 2 vestibules, no need for groundsheet	$600
Wilderness Equipment Second Arrow wildequipment.com.au	Seamsealed polyester (PU)	2000	8000	2.7	2.8	Multi-pitch	$600

Note: Measurements are those stated by the manufacturer, rounded up to one decimal point.

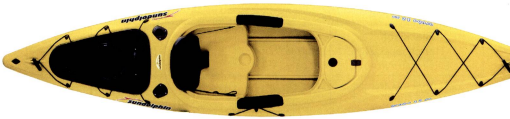
Wild previews the cleverest and shiniest new gear to be launched at May's Snow and Outdoor Trade Association show in Canberra

Cheeky by nature

If you like your water bottle to stand out from the crowd's, take a look at the Cheeki range of stainless steel flasks and jars. Certified as free from the carcinogen Bisphenol A, these brightly coloured vessels are lightweight and affordable. In particular, bush cooks who like to keep leftovers for later may want to consider the 800ml insulated food jar priced $27.95. **cheeki.net.au**

Find your thermal energy

You can't go wrong with the official thermals of the Australian Winter Olympic team, that is, XTM's Merino Thermals. Using wool from Tasmania and Victoria, these thermals are prickle-free and quick-drying with raglan sleeves for underarm comfort and thumb loops for added warmth. Items start at $69.99. **xtm.com.au**



Dolphin watching

The US-made Aruba 12SS offers maximum stability and a large seating area in addition to retractable carry handles, shock cord deck rigging, fishing rod holders and protective thigh pads. With a length of 3.6 metres, this is one of more than 10 Sun Dolphin kayaks being launched in Australia this year. $1099; **seafarermarine.com.au**

Sup brew?

Based on a design forged by Irish fisherman more than a century ago, the quick-boil Kelly Kettle allows you to make a hot brew using only a handful of twigs and leaves for fuel. The lightweight, half-litre Trekker model is a favourite among British campers and kayakers for its reliable chimney mechanism in the coldest of weather, and is newly available in Australia priced from $95. **kellykettle.com.au**

Don't sweat it

The sleek 45-litre Exped Lightning backpack comes in neutral colours such as deep sea blue and lichen green as well as the obligatory black and costs $229.95. Designed to have minimal contact with your body to limit sweating and with a roll-top closure that keeps the rain out, this pack also includes side and front compression straps to increase stability. **expeditionequipment.com.au**

Big boots to fill

Kamik's waterproof, thinsulate-lined Fargo and Brooklyn boots for men and women have been tested at temperatures as low as -40C so you'll be more than set for an Australian winter. The men's Fargo model features a snow-friendly rubber sole and moisture wick lining, while the more stylish Brooklyn boot for women includes a fleece lining and sole more suited to resort living. Priced around $130 and $140 respectively. **kamik.com**

Keep snug as a bug

All Sea to Summit sleeping bags now feature Ultra-Dry Down in combination with the 2D- and 3D-NanoShell system, giving you the best chance of sleeping warm and dry through the worst of conditions. There's no need for extra insulation or shell. From $269; **seatosummit.com.au**

Cup of Joe in a flash

Just add water! The Flash Java Kit makes it a snap to enjoy fresh-roasted coffee whenever you work or play outdoors. It will brew two cups of coffee in just two minutes, and packs to the size of a water bottle. The colour change heat indicator window on the cozy turns orange to show when the water is hot. $179.95; **seatosummit.com.au**

Get the hump

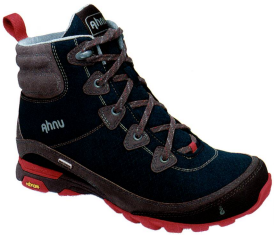
The 3-litre Camelbak M.U.L.E is a premium full-day narrow-gauge mountain bike pack for long rides and walks in any weather, with plenty of room for gear. The lightweight design is perfect for day trip essentials as well as providing Camelbak's famed hydration system for $169.95. **seatosummit.com.au**

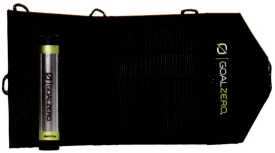
Oh no H_2O

The men's Guides Down Hoody due next year from Marmot boasts added water resistance thanks to a Down Defender coating. The coating keeps the jacket drier longer, maintains its puffiness and helps it dry 30 times quicker than an untreated one. $349.95; **marmotaustralia.com.au**

Right foot forward

One of the highlights of Ahnu's Coastal Trail Collection due out next summer is the Sugarpine Boot, designed to give you a balanced stride by centering and supporting your foot in the right places. These lightweight boots are suited to fast hiking, with a Vibram-branded rubber sole and waterproof upper. $139.95; **ahnu.com.au**





Flair for solar

If you can't live without your gadgets, the Switch 8 Solar portable charger from Goal Zero is a must-buy. Available in Australia in May and priced around $119, this tiny solar-powered gizmo can recharge your dead smartphone or torch (or pretty much any gadget thanks to interchangeable tips) within six hours when combined with the Nomad 3.5 Solar Panel that works while you walk. **goalzero.com**

Time to moondance

The new two-door Moondance EX is the largest tent in Mont's ultra-light series and well-suited to campers looking for a spacious two-person or cosy three-man bushwalking tent. At just 2.6 kilograms it's a comfortable weight for multi-day walks, and can be pitched with or without the fly. Priced $599; **mont.com.au**

Aurora calling

New to Australia for 2013, the Aurora is a 16-foot version of the popular Spirit II from US-based manufacturer Wenonah Canoe. Boasting the same features as the 17-foot model but increased maneuverability, the Aurora is suited to long journeys on flat water or low-grade whitewater. Straight tracking makes this an ideal vessel for clubs, with prices ranging from $2,000 for the 30kg Royalex option to $2850 for the 17.5kg Kevlar Ultra-lite. **paddleportagecanoes.com.au**

Lighten your load

The BlackWolf B-Lite backpack has been updated for added comfort and is due in Australian stores this September, now featuring vented foam shoulder straps, a padded waist belt and expanding side pockets. The pack from Phoenix Leisure, which is available in 35 or 55-litre size, costs from $129 and comes with a rain cover. **blackwolf.com.au**

Atka arrives

This May marks the world debut of the Atka outdoor and travel range, encompassing compact carry bags, dry bags, compasses, fast-dry towels and various survival items. Keep your eyes peeled on **atkagear.com** for details.

Battery happiness

Petzl's new Tikka RXP and Tikka R+ headtorches take the smart reactive lighting technology of last year's Nao model and make it lighter to carry. The torches use a sensor to automatically adjust brightness if more or less light is needed, using minimal battery and therefore lasting around three times longer. Simply recharge via USB. Priced $90 and $70 respectively. **spelean.com.au**

Catch up on Thermarest

Thermarest is moving on from mats and entering the three-season sleeping bag game this year with one of the lightest on the market, along with extra torso room and nifty thermal mapping technology to keep you warm in the most important spots. Specially developed mattress connectors ensure you're not sliding anywhere, and there's a long model for tall folk. **spelean.com.au**

Sacs lose weight

One Planet is relaunching its series of Sac sleeping bags, keeping the generous size and handy features like an internal pocket but ditching the heavy synthetic stuffing for stitch-less Thermolink fibres. This shaves up to 300 grams off the weight and retains heat better, but you'll have to wait until October for the full reveal. **oneplanet.com.au**

Light the way

The LED Lenser SEO headlamp range includes an ideal campsite light in the shape of the SEO7R, weighing just 104 grams but with a coverage of 130 metres, not to mention a red light setting light to help your eyes adjust to the dark. If the $149.95 price tag puts you off, consider the smaller $59.95 model. **Ledlenser.com.au/seo**

Roman invasion

The palm-sized sleeping bag from Roman Outdoor Equipment has been upgraded with better insulation for 2013 but retained its affordable price, starting at $89.95. Featuring snag-free zips and a tapered bottom for warmer feet, this lightweight sleeping bag has been temperature tested against the European norm and come out on top. **roman.com.au**

Get on the E-Case

Keep your phone, e-reader or iPad safe from the rain with a flexible, PVC-free iSeries E-Case featuring sealock zips and windows that allow touchscreen technology to function as normal. Available in numerous dimensions and equipped with lash points, these waterproof cases make it easy to tether your electronics to your bag and walk on worry-free. Prices start at $29.95; **spelean.com.au**

Yes Yukon

Tatonka's newly styled Yukon pack has been billed as a revolution in rucksacks, with a huge front flap that opens up in three dimensions in addition to a compression panel that keeps you stable with kit tight against your back. The rain cover and first aid kit compartment is the definition of handy, while the lightweight T-rip fabric helps you justify overpacking. Prices start at $299 for the Yukon 60 navy and black version. **tatonka.com**

Make your escape

Pre-loaded with 4WD maps to camping spots, as well as the Australian Good Food Guide and Lonely Planet Scenic Routes, the Navman My Escape 2 is what you call an all-in-one GPS. Developed for naturally spontaneous travellers, the GPS is perfectly suited to campervan drivers but also useful for those with limited time to tour the countryside who need all the tips they can get. $499; **navman.com.au**

Directories

***Wild* Directories are the comprehensive reference point for Australasian outdoors-related businesses. For only $48 ($58 in spot red) an issue you can have your business listed here and reach a worldwide audience. *Wild* Directories – gateway to Australia's outdoors.**

For information on listing your business in this regular feature, contact Prime Creative Media 11-15 Buckhurst Street, South Melbourne, VIC 3205 Ph: (03) 9690 8766 Fax: (03) 9682 0044, or email gayle.shapcott@primecreative.com.au

Directories can also be seen online at *www.wild.com.au*

Suppliers

National Mail-order

Canoes Plus
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Kew East Vic 3102
Ph (03) 9857 0110

K2 Base Camp
140 Wickham St
Fortitude Valley Qld 4006
Ph (07) 3854 1340

Macpac
www.macpac.co.nz
Ph 1800 128 504

Mountain Equipment
491 Kent St
Sydney NSW 2000
Fax (02) 9264 2645

Outdoor Shack
1131 Pittwater Rd
Collaroy Beach NSW 2097
outdoorshack.com.au

Prime Creative Media
11-15 Buckhurst St
South Melbourne 3205
Ph (03) 9690 8766

Snowgum Australia Pty Ltd
snowgum.com.au
Toll Free - 1800 811 312

New South Wales

Camp Hike Climb
Suite 1, Ground Floor
20 George St, Hornsby 2077
camphikeclimb.com.au

Mountain Equipment
72 Archer St
Chatswood 2067
Ph (02) 9419 6955

Mountain Equipment
491 Kent St
Sydney 2000
Ph (02) 9264 5888

Trek & Travel
447 Kent St
Sydney 2000
Ph (02) 9261 3435

Northern Territory

NT General Stores Pty Ltd
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Darwin 0800
Ph (08) 8981 8242

Queensland

It's Extreme
32 Spence St
Cairns 4870
Ph (07) 4051 0344

K2 Base Camp
140 Wickham St
Fortitude Valley 4006
Ph (07) 3854 1340

South Australia

Annapurna Outdoor Shop
210 Rundle St
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Scout Outdoor Centre
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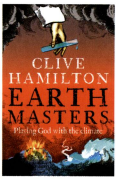
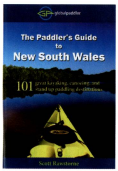
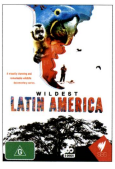
FLORA OF THE OTWAY PLAIN & RANGES 2
BY ENID MAYFIELD
(CSIRO PUBLISHING, 2013, RRP $59.95)
This hefty follow-up to the 2010 field guide covers more than 480 species of daisies, sundews, wattles and other dicotyledons across Victoria's diverse Otway region with wonderfully detailed illustrations. Cleanly laid-out and featuring notes on seed-dispersing animals as well as global population, this suits amateur botanists as much as experts looking for detail on flowering habits or reaction to bushfire. While in awe of the meticulous research that has gone into the book, I was perhaps most fascinated by the explanations of Latin names such as 'ciliatus - with hairs like eyelashes' and the number of endemic species in plant families such as the sundew. Close-up drawings of flower heads also give you plenty of help separating one plant from similar ones in the same genus.



EARTHMASTERS:
PLAYING GOD WITH THE CLIMATE
BY CLIVE HAMILTON
(ALLEN & UNWIN, 2013, RRP $24.99)
A philosopher rather than a lab rat, Clive Hamilton has created an unputdownable text for anyone with even a minimal interest in climate science and conservation, exploring the logistics and ethics of geoengineering in an easily digestible way. I found myself reading open-mouthed about science fiction-like proposals to manipulate our planet's climate systems in order to offset the effects of global warming, which include fertilising the Southern Ocean with iron so that phytoplankton can transport more carbon from our emissions to the depths. Written with pace, Earthmasters holds your attention through all its analysis of geoengineering schemes currently being tested and provides plenty of quotable dinner party material. There is a danger with such books to leave you feeling despondent, cursing the fact that Australians produce the most carbon emissions per person of any industrialised nation or that reforestation will not save us from a world without ice in this century, but the (admittedly less captivating) chapters covering political and moral hazards give you plenty more to mull over. And if you thought rescuing the last 26% of the Earth considered wilderness was as easy as simply turning off the fossil fuel burner, think again.



THE PADDLER'S GUIDE TO
NEW SOUTH WALES
BY SCOTT RAWSTORNE
(GLOBALPADDLER, 2013, RRP $25.00)
The author of an equivalent guide to Queensland, Scott Rawstorne serves up detailed descriptions, photos and maps for 101 of the best paddling destinations in New South Wales together with historical facts and an introduction to the gear and skills you need. The large font and conversational tone make this easy to dip into while on the move, and chapters are littered with famous quotes for added inspiration. Rawstorne's notes on lesser-known kayaking spots such as Currambene Creek give you a clear idea of the scenery, traffic and animal sounds you can expect while helping you appreciate how locals have interacted with the water over time. His enthusiasm for wildlife watching from the river shines through and I challenge you not to get excited by images like that on page 236.



WILDEST LATIN AMERICA
(MADMAN, 2013, RRP $29.95)
This five-part series exploring Latin America's most unique locations may not rival the likes of Bruce Parry's *Amazon* or David Attenborough's *Planet Earth* for plotting and suspense but the images of penguins frolicking the Patagonian desert, 70-kilogram capybaras fighting in the Los Lanos wetlands and jaguars prowling the Pantanal are manna from heaven for South America-o-philes like me. Following some of the most specialised animals and people on the planet, the series charts the bizarrely adapted lifestyles of killer whales in Patagonia and the men who work as Atacama salt diggers, to name a couple, while serving up gorgeous aerial and time-lapse shots that will have you reaching for the travel planner in no time.

All reviews by Carlie Trotter

Phil Ingamells

I was born in Melbourne but lucky that my relatives had a place in Lorne and my parents knew people who had an old, defunct guesthouse near the penguin parade on Phillip Island. We had holidays there, always scrambling up the creeks at Lorne or climbing down the cliffs at Phillip Island. I just fell head over heels in love with the bush as a kid, and I've never lost it.

My mother grew up in the bush and, even though she wasn't a conservationist or a greenie, she had a real love for it. She could make a kookaburra call that would fool any bird. We had really good contact with the wild and I often feel sad that many kids today don't have that, more so than ever before.

After school, I did a chaotic collection of things. I did three half degrees – one architecture, one photography and filmmaking, and one biology – and explored the hippie thing for a while. I lived on the south coast of New South Wales and travelled through South-east Asia and India for six months on the hippie trail, way back in 1971. That crazy mix of experience and half qualifications led me, in 1985, to somewhat accidentally pick up a job at the National Parks Service in the education unit. With part architecture and design, part photography, and part biology, I was well equipped for working on things like park information centres and publications. I worked with the NPS in various roles for 10 years, which took me right across Victoria.

Then the Kennett government that was in power in 1985 decided conservation education wasn't the role of Government. We had a 30-strong education unit in the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, and it just went.

Though the education unit no longer existed, the job still had to be done. There still had to be publications about the parks as well as audio-visual information, so I did it privately for about ten years. I made absolutely no money as it cost about ten times what I was being paid; that's the problem with liking your job so much.

In the meantime, I became very involved with the Victorian National Parks Association. After many years as a volunteer I ended up on the VNPA Council and found that I was doing so much free work for them that my business suffered. When a campaign job came up, I thought it made sense to work for them officially and have been there for a decade now.

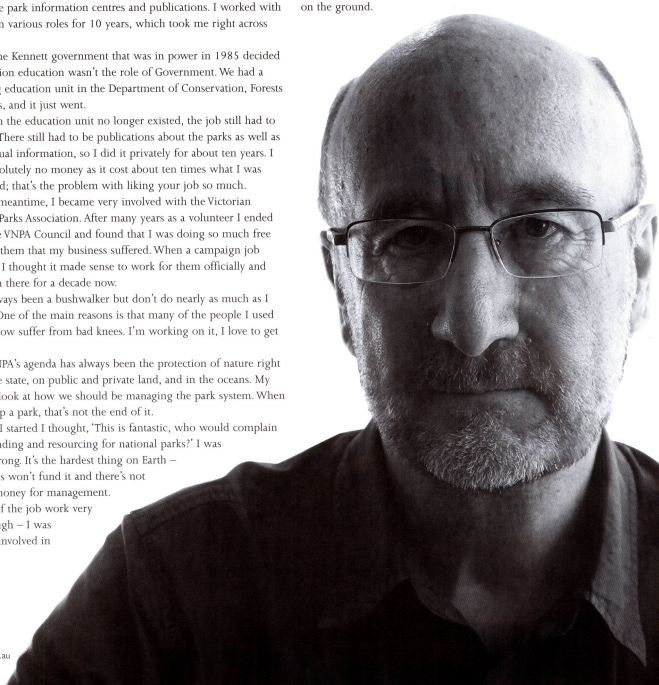
I've always been a bushwalker but don't do nearly as much as I used to. One of the main reasons is that many of the people I used to walk now suffer from bad knees. I'm working on it, I love to get out.

The VNPA's agenda has always been the protection of nature right across the state, on public and private land, and in the oceans. My job is to look at how we should be managing the park system. When you set up a park, that's not the end of it.

When I started I thought, 'This is fantastic, who would complain about funding and resourcing for national parks?' I was totally wrong. It's the hardest thing on Earth – politicians won't fund it and there's not a lot of money for management. Aspects of the job work very well though – I was strongly involved in getting cattle off the High Country, which was a big success, and I'm working hard on fire management.

Since the [2009 Victorian Bushfires] Royal Commission the target has been to burn five per cent of public land per year, which is around 390 000 hectares. They believed that Victorians needed a simple accountable target for fuel reduction burning, but it's now clear that the target is forcing burns into more remote areas rather than the important ones, near townships for example. They are burning ecosystems that are likely to produce more fuel rather than less, and sometimes severely reducing habitats of bird species such as the mallee fowl. The flaws in the burn target program are widely understood by Parks Victoria, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, and biologists, but it's government policy – and highly emotive – so it's hard to fight. Burns should be sensibly conducted where they're useful and don't compromise our natural heritage. Simple is not necessarily better – it's almost insulting. People understand that you can drive at different speeds on different roads.

I genuinely feel privileged to work for the VNPA. It's a conservation organisation that's strongly linked to the scientific community; an evidence-based organisation that's really got its feet on the ground.



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